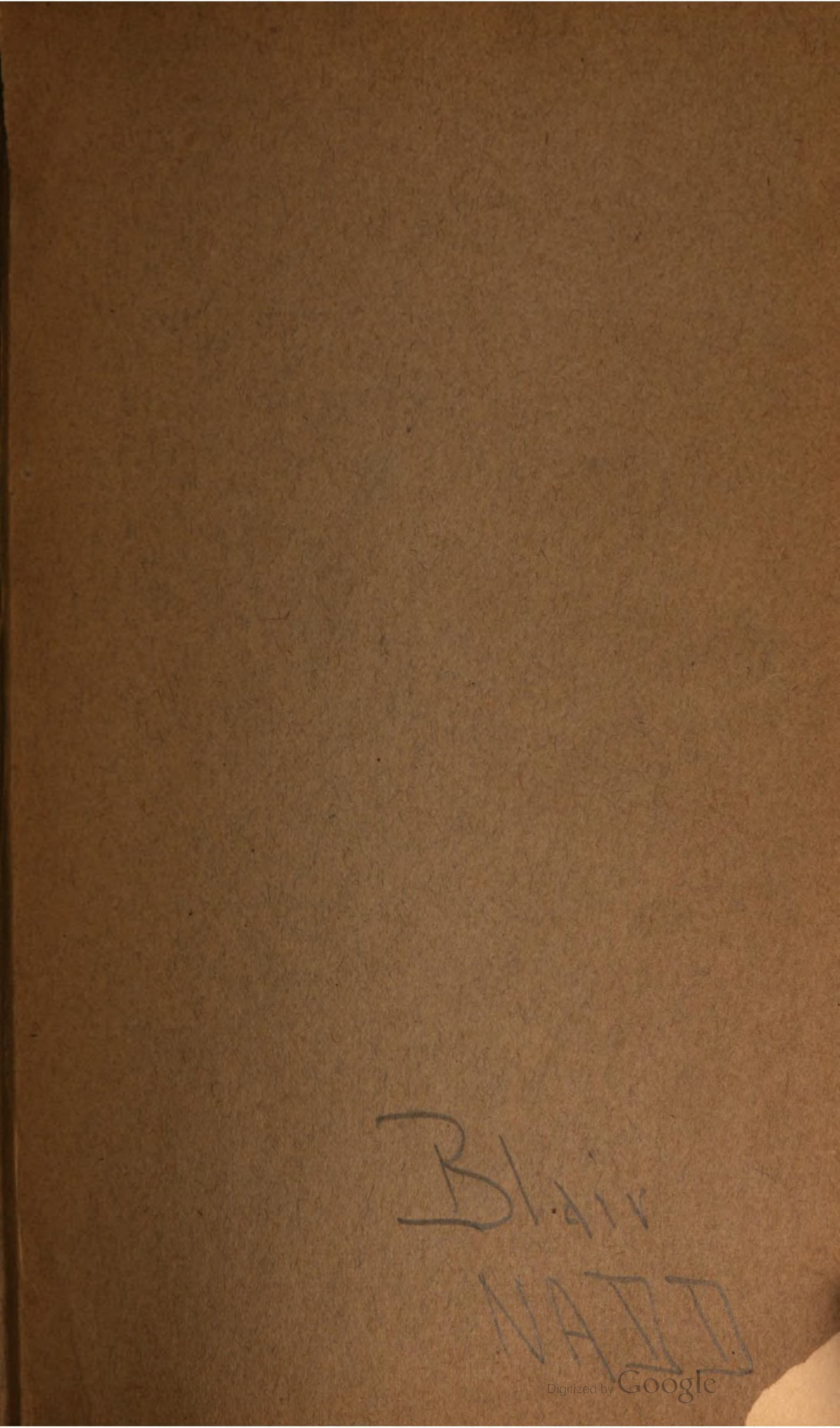

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LECTURES

Peter Gansevoort
Nassau Hall, Princeton
Feby 1808

ON

RHETORIC

AND

BELLES LETTRES.

BY HUGH BLAIR, D. D.

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE HIGH CHURCH, AND PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND BELLES LETTRES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

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Peter W. Gansevoort

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LECTURE XXVII.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING. ELOQUENCE OF POPULAR ASSEMBLIES. EXTRACTS FROM DEMOSTHENES.

AFTER the preliminary views which have been given of the nature of eloquence in general, and of the ſtate in which it has ſubſiſted in different ages and countries, I am now to enter on the conſideration of the different kinds of public ſpeaking, the diſtinguiſhing characters of each, and the rules which relate to them. The ancients divided all orations into three kinds; the demonſtrative, the deliberative, and the judicial. The ſcope of the demonſtrative, was to praiſe or to blame; that of the deliberative, to adviſe or to diſſuade; that of the judicial, to accuſe or to defend. The chief ſubjects of demonſtrative eloquence, were panegyrics, invectives, gratulatory and funeral orations. The deliberative was employed in matters of public concern, agitated in the ſenate, or before the aſſemblies of the people. The judicial is the ſame with the eloquence of the bar, employed in addreſſing judges, who have power to abſolve or to condemn. This diviſion runs through all the ancient treatiſes on rhetoric; and is followed by the moderns, who copy them. It is a diviſion not inartificial; and comprehends moſt, or all of the matters which can be the ſubject of public diſcourſe. It will, however, ſuit our purpoſe better, and be found, I imagine, more uſeful, to follow that diviſion which the train of modern ſpeaking naturally points out to us, taken from the three great ſcenes of eloquence,

popular

popular aſſemblies, the bar, and the pulpit; each of which has a diſtinct character that particularly ſuits it. This diviſion coincides in part with the ancient one. The eloquence of the bar is preciſely the ſame with what the ancients called the judicial. The eloquence of popular aſſemblies, though moſtly of what they term the deliberative ſpecies, yet admits alſo of the demonſtrative. The eloquence of the pulpit is altogether of a diſtinct nature, and cannot be properly reduced under any of the heads of the ancient rhetoricians.

To all the three, pulpit, bar, and popular aſſemblies, belong, in common, the rules concerning the conduct of a diſcourſe in all its parts. Of theſe rules I purpoſe afterwards to treat at large. But before proceeding to them, I intend to ſhow, firſt, what is peculiar to each of theſe three kinds of oratory, in their ſpirit, character, or manner. For every ſpecies of public ſpeaking has a manner or character peculiarly ſuited to it; of which it is highly material to have a juſt idea, in order to direct the application of general rules. The Eloquence of a lawyer is fundamentally different from that of a divine, or a ſpeaker in parliament: and to have a preciſe and proper idea of the diſtinguiſhing character which any kind of public ſpeaking requires, is the foundation of what is called a juſt taſte in that kind of ſpeaking.

Laying aſide any queſtion concerning the pre-eminence in point of rank, which is due to any one of the three kinds before mentioned, I ſhall begin with that which tends to throw moſt light upon the reſt, viz. the Eloquence of popular aſſemblies. The moſt auguſt theatre for this kind of Eloquence, to be found in any nation of Europe, is, beyond doubt, the parliament of Great Britain. In meetings too, of leſs dignity, it may diſplay itſelf. Wherever there is a popular court, or wherever any number of men are aſſembled for debate or conſultation, there, in different forms, this ſpecies of Eloquence may take place.

Its object is, or ought always to be, perſuaſion. There muſt be ſome end propoſed; ſome point, moſt commonly of public utility or good, in favour of which we ſeek to determine the hearers. Now, in all attempts to perſuade men, we muſt proceed upon this principle, that it is neceſſary to convince their underſtanding.

understanding. Nothing can be more erroneous, than to imagine, that, because speeches to popular assemblies admit more of a declamatory style than some other discourses, they therefore stand less in need of being supported by sound reasoning. When modelled upon this false idea, they may have the show, but never can produce the effect, of real eloquence. Even the show of eloquence which they make, will please only the trifling and superficial. For, with all tolerable judges, indeed almost with all men, mere declamation soon becomes insipid. Of whatever rank the hearers be, a speaker is never to presume, that by a frothy and ostentatious harangue, without solid sense and argument, he can either make impression on them, or acquire fame to himself. It is, at least, a dangerous experiment; for, where such an artifice succeeds once, it will fail ten times. Even the common people are better judges of argument and good sense, than we sometimes think them; and upon any question of business, a plain man, who speaks to the point without art, will generally prevail over the most artful speaker who deals in flowers and ornament, rather than in reasoning. Much more, when public speakers address themselves to any assembly where there are persons of education and improved understanding, they ought to be careful not to trifle with their hearers.

Let it be ever kept in view, that the foundation of all that can be called Eloquence, is good sense, and solid thought. As popular as the orations of Demosthenes were, spoken to all the citizens of Athens, every one who looks into them, must see how fraught they are with argument; and how important it appeared to him, to convince the understanding, in order to persuade, or to work on the principles of action. Hence their influence in his own time; hence their fame at this day. Such a pattern as this, public speakers ought to set before them for imitation, rather than follow the track of those loose and frothy declaimers, who have brought discredit on Eloquence. Let it be their first study, in addressing any popular assembly, to be previously masters of the business on which they are to speak; to be well provided with matter and argument; and to rest upon these the chief stress. This will always give to their discourse an air of manliness and strength, which is a powerful

erful inftrument of perfuafion. Ornament, if they have genius for it, will follow of courfe; at any rate, it demands only their fecondary ftudy: "Cura fit verborum; folicitudo rerum." "To your expreffion be attentive, but about your matter be "folicitous," is an advice of Quintilian, which cannot be too often recollected by all who ftudy oratory.

In the next place, in order to be perfuafive fpeakers in a popular affembly, it is, in my opinion, a capital rule, that we be ourfelves perfuaded of whatever we recommend to others. Never, when it can be avoided, ought we to efpoufe any fide of the argument, but what we believe to be the true and the right one. Seldom or never will a man be eloquent, but when he is in earneft, and uttering his own fentiments. They are only the "veræ voces ab imo pectore," the unaffumed language of the heart or head, that carry the force of conviction. In a former Lecture, when entering on this fubject, I obferved, that all high Eloquence muft be the offspring of paffion, or warm emotion. It is this which makes every man perfuafive; and gives a force to his genius, which it poffeffes at no other time. Under what difadvantage then is he placed, who, not feeling what he utters, muft counterfeit a warmth to which he is a ftranger?

I know, that young people, on purpofe to train themfelves to the art of fpeaking, imagine it ufeful to adopt that fide of the queftion under debate, which, to themfelves, appears the weakeft, and to try what figure they can make upon it. But, I am afraid, this is not the moft improving education for public fpeaking; and that it tends to form them to a habit of flimfy and trivial difcourfe. Such a liberty they fhould, at no time, allow themfelves, unlefs in meetings where no real bufinefs is carried on, but where declamation and improvement in fpeech is the fole aim. Nor even in fuch meetings, would I recommend it as the moft ufeful exercife. They will improve themfelves to more advantage, and acquit themfelves with more honour, by choofing always that fide of the debate to which, in their own judgment, they are moft inclined, and fupporting it by what feems to themfelves moft folid and perfuafive. They will acquire the habit of reafoning clofely, and expreffing them-

felves

ſelves with warmth and force, much more when they are adhering to their own ſentiments, than when they are ſpeaking in contradiction to them. In aſſemblies where any real buſineſs is carried on, whether that buſineſs be of much importance or not, it is always of dangerous conſequence for young practitioners to make trial of this ſort of play of ſpeech. It may fix an imputation on their characters before they are aware; and what they intended merely as amuſement, may be turned to the diſcredit, either of their principles or their underſtanding.

Debate, in popular courts, ſeldom allows the ſpeaker that full and accurate preparation beforehand, which the pulpit always, and the bar ſometimes, admits. The arguments muſt be ſuited to the courſe which the debate takes; and as no man can exactly foreſee this, one who truſts to a ſet ſpeech, compoſed in his cloſet, will, on many occaſions, be thrown out of the ground which he had taken. He will find it pre-occupied by others, or his reaſonings ſuperſeded by ſome new turn of the buſineſs; and, if he ventures to uſe his prepared ſpeech, it will be frequently at the hazard of making an awkward figure. There is a general prejudice with us, and not wholly an unjuſt one, againſt ſet ſpeeches in public meetings. The only occaſion, when they have any propriety, is, at the opening of a debate, when the ſpeaker has it in his power to chooſe his field. But as the debate advances, and parties warm, diſcourſes of this kind become more unſuitable. They want the native air; the appearance of being ſuggeſted by the buſineſs that is going on; ſtudy and oſtentation are apt to be viſible; and, of courſe, though applauded as elegant, they are ſeldom ſo perſuaſive as more free and unconſtrained diſcourſes.

This, however, does not by any means conclude againſt premeditation of what we are to ſay; the neglect of which, and the truſting wholly to extemporaneous efforts, will unavoidably produce the habit of ſpeaking in a looſe and undigeſted manner. But the premeditation which is of moſt advantage, in the caſe which we now conſider, is of the ſubject or argument in general, rather than of nice compoſition in any particular branch of it. With regard to the matter, we cannot be too accurate in our preparation, ſo as to be fully maſters of the buſineſs under conſideration; but, with regard to words

and expreſſion, it is very poſſible ſo far to overdo, as to render our ſpeech ſtiff and preciſe. Indeed, till once perſons acquire that firmneſs, that preſence of mind, and command of expreſſion, in a public meeting, which nothing but habit and practice can beſtow, it may be proper for a young ſpeaker to commit to memory the whole of what he is to ſay. But, after ſome performances of this kind have given him boldneſs, he will find it the better method not to confine himſelf ſo ſtrictly; but only to write, beforehand, ſome ſentences with which he intends to ſet out, in order to put himſelf fairly in the train; and, for the reſt, to ſet down ſhort notes of the topics, or principal thoughts upon which he is to inſiſt, in their order, leaving the words to be ſuggeſted by the warmth of diſcourſe. Such ſhort notes of the ſubſtance of the diſcourſe, will be found of conſiderable ſervice, to thoſe, eſpecially, who are beginning to ſpeak in public. They will accuſtom them to ſome degree of accuracy, which, if they ſpeak frequently, they are in danger too ſoon of loſing. They will even accuſtom them to think more cloſely on the ſubject in queſtion; and will aſſiſt them greatly in arranging their thoughts with method and order.

This leads me next to obſerve, that in all kinds of public ſpeaking, nothing is of greater conſequence than a proper and clear method. I mean not that formal method of laying down heads and ſubdiviſions, which is commonly practiſed in the pulpit; and which, in popular aſſemblies, unleſs the ſpeaker be a man of great authority and character, and the ſubject of great importance, and the preparation too very accurate, is rather in hazard of diſguſting the hearers: ſuch an introduction preſenting always the melancholy proſpect of a long diſcourſe. But though the method be not laid down in form, no diſcourſe, of any length, ſhould be without method; that is, every thing ſhould be found in its proper place. Every one who ſpeaks, will find it of the greateſt advantage to himſelf to have previouſly arranged his thoughts, and claſſed under proper heads, in his own mind, what he is to deliver. This will aſſiſt his memory, and carry him through his diſcourſe, without that confuſion to which one is every moment ſubject, who has fixed no diſtinct plan of what he is to ſay. And with re-

ſpect

ſpect to the hearers, order in diſcourſe is abſolutely neceſſary for making any proper impreſſion. It adds both force and light to what is ſaid. It makes them accompany the ſpeaker eaſily and readily, as he goes along; and makes them feel the full effect of every argument which he employs. Few things, therefore, deſerve more to be attended to than diſtinct arrangement: for Eloquence, however great, can never produce entire conviction without it. Of the rules of method, and the proper diſtribution of the ſeveral parts of a diſcourſe, I am hereafter to treat.

Let us now conſider of the ſtyle and expreſſion ſuited to the Eloquence of popular aſſemblies. Beyond doubt, theſe give ſcope for the moſt animated manner of public ſpeaking. The very aſpect of a large aſſembly, engaged in ſome debate of moment, and attentive to the diſcourſe of one man, is ſufficient to inſpire that man with ſuch elevation and warmth, as both give riſe to ſtrong expreſſions, and give them propriety. Paſſion eaſily riſes in a great aſſembly, where the movements are communicated by mutual ſympathy between the orator and the audience. Thoſe bold figures, of which I treated formerly as the native language of paſſion, have then their proper place. That ardour of ſpeech, that vehemence and glow of ſentiment, which ariſe from a mind animated and inſpired by ſome great and public object, form the peculiar characteriſtics of popular Eloquence, in its higheſt degree of perfection.

The liberty, however, which we are now giving of the ſtrong and paſſionate manner to this kind of oratory, muſt be always underſtood with certain limitations and reſtraints, which, it will be neceſſary to point out diſtinctly, in order to guard againſt dangerous miſtakes on this ſubject.

As firſt, The warmth which we expreſs muſt be ſuited to the occaſion and the ſubject: for nothing can be more prepoſterous, than an attempt to introduce great vehemence into a ſubject, which is either of ſlight importance, or which, by its nature, requires to be treated of calmly. A temperate tone of ſpeech, is that for which there is moſt frequent occaſion; and he who is, on every ſubject, paſſionate and vehement, will be conſidered as a bluſterer, and meet with little regard.

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In the fecond place, We muft take care never to counterfeit warmth without feeling it. This always betrays perfons into an unnatural manner, which expofes them to ridicule. For, as I have often fuggefted, to fupport the appearance, without the real feeling of paffion, is one of the moft difficult things in nature. The difguife can almoft never be fo perfect, but it is difcovered. The heart can only anfwer to the heart. The great rule here, as indeed in every other cafe, is, to follow nature; never to attempt a ftrain of Eloquence which is not feconded by our own genius. One may be a fpeaker, both of much reputation and much influence, in the calm argumentative manner. To attain the pathetic, and the fublime of oratory, requires thofe ftrong fenfibilities of mind, and that high power of expreffion, which are given to few.

In the third place, Even when the fubject juftifies the vehement manner, and when genius prompts it; when warmth is felt, not counterfeited; we muft, however, fet a guard on ourfelves, not to allow impetuofity to tranfport us too far. Without emotion in the fpeaker, Eloquence, as was before obferved, will never produce its higheft effects; but, at the fame time, if the fpeaker lofe command of himfelf, he will foon lofe command of his audience too. He muft never kindle too foon: he muft begin with moderation; and ftudy to carry his hearers along with him, as he warms in the progrefs of his difcourfe. For, if he runs before in the courfe of paffion, and leaves them behind; if they are not tuned, if we may fpeak fo, in unifon to him, the difcord will prefently be felt, and be very grating. Let a fpeaker have never fo good reafon to be animated and fired by his fubject, it is always expected of him, that the awe and regard due to his audience fhould lay a decent reftraint upon his warmth, and prevent it from carrying him beyond certain bounds. If, when moft heated by the fubject, he can be fo far mafter of himfelf as to preferve clofe attention to argument, and even to fome degree of correct expreffion, this felf-command, this exertion of reafon, in the midft of paffion, has a wonderful effect both to pleafe, and to perfuade. It is indeed the mafter-piece, the higheft attainment of Eloquence; uniting the ftrength of reafon, with the vehemence of paffion: affording all the advantages of paffion for the purpofe of perfuafion, without

without the confusion and disorder which are apt to accompany it.

In the fourth place, In the highest and most animated strain of popular speaking, we must always preserve regard to what the public ear will bear. This direction I give, in order to guard against an injudicious imitation of ancient orators, who, both in their pronunciation and gesture, and in their figures of expression, used a bolder manner than what the greater coolness of modern taste will readily suffer. This may, perhaps, as I formerly observed, be a disadvantage to modern Eloquence. It is no reason why we should be too severe in checking the impulse of genius, and continue always creeping on the ground; but it is a reason, however, why we should avoid carrying the tone of declamation to a height that would now be reckoned extravagant. Demosthenes, to justify the unsuccessful action of Cheronæa, calls up the manes of those heroes who fell in the battles of Marathon and Platæa, and swears by them that their fellow-citizens had done well, in their endeavours to support the same cause. Cicero, in his oration for Milo, implores and attests the Alban hills and groves, and makes a long address to them: and both passages, in these orators, have a fine effect.* But how few modern orators could venture on such apostrophes? and what a power of genius would it require to give such figures now their proper grace, or make them produce a due effect upon the hearers?

In the fifth and last place, In all kinds of public speaking, but especially in popular assemblies, it is a capital rule to attend to all the decorums of time, place, and character. No warmth of Eloquence can atone for the neglect of these. That vehemence,

* The passage in Cicero is very beautiful and adorned with the highest colouring of his Eloquence. "Non est humano consilio, ne mediocri quidem, "Judices, deorum immortalium cura, res illa perfecta. Religiones, mehercule, "ipsæ aræque cum illam belluam cadere viderunt, commovisse se videntur, et "jus in illo suum retinuisse. Vos enim jam Albani tumuli, atque luci, vos "inquam imploro atque obtestor, vosque Albanorum obrutæ aræ, sacrorum "populi Romani sociæ et equales, quas ille præceps amentiâ cæsis prostratisque, sanctissimis lucis, substructionem insanis molibus oppresserat; vestræ tum "aræ, vestræ religiones viguerunt, vestra vis vasuit, quam ille omni scelere polluerat. Tuque ex tuo edito monte Latiali, sancte Jupiter, cujus ille lacus, nemora, finesque, sæpe omni nefario stupro, scelere maculârat, aliquando ad eum "puniendum, oculos aperuisti; vobis illæ, vobis vestro in conspectu, seræ, sed "justæ tamen, & debitæ pœnæ solutæ sunt."

mence, which is becoming in a perſon of character and authority, may be unſuitable to the modeſty expected from a young ſpeaker. That ſportive and witty manner which may ſuit one ſubject and one aſſembly, is altogether out of place in a grave cauſe, and a ſolemn meeting. "Caput artis eſt," ſays Quintilian, "decere." "The firſt principle of art, is to obſerve "decorum." No one ſhould ever riſe to ſpeak in public, without forming to himſelf a juſt and ſtrict idea of what ſuits his own age and character; what ſuits the ſubject, the hearers, the place, the occaſion: and adjuſting the whole train and manner of his ſpeaking on this idea. All the ancients inſiſt much on this. Conſult the firſt chapter of the eleventh book of Quintilian, which is employed wholly on this point, and is full of good ſenſe. Cicero's admonitions in his Orator ad Brutum, I ſhall give in his own words, which ſhould never be forgotten by any who ſpeak in public. "Eſt Eloquentiæ, ſicut "reliquarum rerum, fundamentum, ſapientia; ut enim in vi- "ta, ſic in oratione nihil eſt difficilius quam quod deceat vide- "re; hujus ignoratione ſæpiſſimè peccatur; non enim omnis "fortuna, non omnis auctoritas, non omnis ætas, nec verò lo- "cus, aut tempus, aut auditor omnis, eodem aut verborum "genere tractandus eſt, aut centeniarum. Semperque in "omni parte orationis, ut vitæ, quid deceat conſiderandum; "quod et in re de qua agitur poſitum eſt, et in perſonis et "eorum qui dicunt, et eorum qui audiunt."* So much for the conſiderations that require to be attended to, with reſpect to the vehemence and warmth which are allowed in popular Eloquence.

The current of the ſtyle ſhould in general be full, free, and natural. Quaint and artificial expreſſions are out of place here; and always derogate from perſuaſion. It is a ſtrong and manly ſtyle which ſhould chiefly be ſtudied; and metaphorical language,

* "Good ſenſe is the foundation of Eloquence, as it is of all other things "that are valuable. It happens in oratory exactly as it does in life, that frequently nothing is more difficult than to diſcern what is proper and becoming. In conſequence of miſtaking this, the groſſeſt faults are often committed. "For to the different degrees of rank, fortune, and age among all men, to the "varieties of time, place, and auditory, the ſame ſtyle of language, and the "ſame ſtrain of thought, cannot agree. In every part of a diſcourſe, juſt "as in every part of life, we muſt attend to what is ſuitable and decent; "whether that be determined by the nature of the ſubject of which we treat, "or by the characters of thoſe who ſpeak, or of thoſe who hear."

language, when properly introduced, produces often a happy effect. When the metaphors are warm, glowing, and descriptive, some inaccuracy in them will be overlooked, which, in a written composition, would be remarked and censured. Amidst the torrent of declamation, the strength of the figure makes impression; the inaccuracy of it escapes.

With regard to the degree of conciseness or diffuseness suited to popular Eloquence, it is not easy to fix any exact bounds. I know that it is common to recommend a diffuse manner as the most proper. I am inclined, however, to think, that there is danger of erring in this respect; and that by indulging too much in the diffuse style, public speakers often lose more in point of strength, than they gain by the fullness of their illustration. There is no doubt, that in speaking to a multitude, we must not speak in sentences and apothegms: care must be taken to explain and inculcate; but this care may be, and frequently is, carried too far. We ought always to remember, that how much soever we may be pleased with hearing ourselves speak, every audience is very ready to be tired; and the moment they begin to tire, all our Eloquence goes for nothing. A loose and verbose manner never fails to create disgust; and, on most occasions, we had better run the risque of saying too little, than too much. Better place our thought in one strong point of view, and rest it there, than by turning it into every light, and pouring forth a profusion of words upon it, exhaust the attention of our hearers, and leave them flat and languid.

Of pronunciation and delivery, I am hereafter to treat apart. It is sufficient now to observe, that in speaking to mixt assemblies, the best manner of delivery is the firm and the determined. An arrogant and overbearing manner is indeed always disagreeable; and the least appearance of it ought to be shunned: but there is a certain decisive tone, which may be assumed even by a modest man, who is thoroughly persuaded of the sentiments he utters; and which is the best calculated for making a general impression. A feeble and hesitating manner bespeaks always some distrust of a man's own opinion; which is, by no means, a favourable circumstance for his inducing others to embrace it.

These

These are the chief thoughts which have occurred to me from reflection and observation, concerning the peculiar distinguishing characters of the Eloquence proper for popular assemblies. The sum of what has been said, is this: The end of popular speaking is persuasion; and this must be founded on conviction. Argument and reasoning must be the basis, if we would be speakers of business, and not mere declaimers. We should be engaged in earnest on the side which we espouse; and utter, as much as possible, our own, and not counterfeited sentiments. The premeditation should be of things, rather than of words. Clear order and method should be studied; the manner and expression warm and animated; though still, in the midst of that vehemence, which may at times be suitable, carried on under the proper restraints which regard to the audience, and to the decorum of character, ought to lay on every public speaker: the style free and easy; strong and descriptive, rather than diffuse; and the delivery determined and firm. To conclude this head, let every orator remember, that the impression made by fine and artful speaking is momentary; that made by argument and good sense, is solid and lasting.

I shall now, that I may afford an exemplification of that species of oratory of which I have been treating, insert some extracts from Demosthenes. Even under the great disadvantage of an English translation, they will exhibit a small specimen of that vigorous and spirited Eloquence which I have so often praised. I shall take my extracts mostly from the Philippics and Olynthiacs, which were entirely popular orations spoken to the general convention of the citizens of Athens: and, as the subject of both the Philippics, and the Olynthiacs, is the same, I shall not confine myself to one oration, but shall join together passages taken from two or three of them; such as may show his general strain of speaking, on some of the chief branches of the subject. The subject in general is, to rouse the Athenians to guard against Philip of Macedon, whose growing power and crafty policy had by that time endangered, and soon after overwhelmed the liberties of Greece. The Athenians began to be alarmed; but their deliberations were slow, and their measures feeble; several of their favourite orators

tors having been gained by Philip's bribes to favour his cause. In this critical conjuncture of affairs, Demosthenes arose. In the following manner he begins his first Philippic; which, like the exordiums of all his orations, is simple and artless.*

"Had we been convened, Athenians! on some new subject "of debate, I had waited till most of your usual counsellors "had declared their opinions. If I had approved of what was "proposed by them, I should have continued silent; if not, I "should then have attempted to speak my sentiments. But "since those very points on which these speakers have often "times been heard already, are at this time to be considered; "though I have arisen first, I presume I may expect your par- "don; for if they on former occasions had advised the proper "measures, you would not have found it needful to consult "at present.

"First then, Athenians! however wretched the situation of "our affairs at present seems, it must not by any means be "thought desperate. What I am now going to advance may "possibly appear a paradox; yet it is a certain truth, that our "past misfortunes afford a circumstance the most favourable "of all others to our future hopes.† And what is that? even "that our present difficulties are owing entirely to our total "indolence, and utter disregard to our own interest. For "were we thus situated, in spite of every effort which our "duty demanded, then indeed we might regard our fortunes "as absolutely desperate. But now, Philip hath only con- "quered your supineness and inactivity; the state he hath not "conquered. You cannot be said to be defeated; your force "hath never been exerted.

"If there is a man in this assembly who thinks that we must "find a formidable enemy in Philip, while he views on one "hand the numerous armies which surround him, and on the "other, the weakness of our state, despoiled of so much of its "dominions, I cannot deny that he thinks justly. Yet let him "reflect on this: there was a time, Athenians! when we pos-

* In the following extracts, Leland's translation is mostly followed.

† This thought is not only hinted at in the first Philippic, but brought out more fully in the third; as the same thoughts, occasioned by similar situations of affairs, sometimes occur in the different orations on this subject.

" sessed Pydna, Potidœa, and Melthone, and all that country " round: when many of the states, now subjected to him, " were free and independent, and more inclined to our alliance " than to his. If Philip, at that time weak in himself, and " without allies, had desponded of success against you, he " would never have engaged in those enterprises which are " now crowned with success, nor could have raised himself to " that pitch of grandeur at which you now behold him. But " he knew well that the strongest places are only prizes laid be- " tween the combatants, and ready for the conqueror. He " knew that the dominions of the absent devolve naturally to " those who are in the field; the possessions of the supine, to " the active and intrepid. Animated by these sentiments, he " overturns whole nations. He either rules universally as a " conqueror, or governs as a protector. For mankind natur- " ally seek confederacy with such, as they see resolved and " preparing not to be wanting to themselves.

" If you, my countrymen! will now at length be persuaded " to entertain the like sentiments; if each of you will be " disposed to approve himself an useful citizen, to the utmost " that his station and abilities enable him; if the rich will be " ready to contribute, and the young to take the field; in " one word, if you will be yourselves, and banish these vain " hopes which every single person entertains, that the active " part of public business may lie upon others and he remain " at his ease; you may then, by the assistance of the gods, re- " cal those opportunities which your supineness hath neglect- " ed, regain your dominions, and chastise the insolence of " this man.

" But when, O my countrymen! will you begin to exert " your vigour? Do you wait till roused by some dire event? " till forced by some necessity? When then are we to think " of our present condition? To free men, the disgrace attend- " ing on misconduct is, in my opinion, the most urgent neces- " sity. Or say, is it your sole ambition to wander through the " public places, each inquiring of the other, " what new ad- " vices?" Can any thing be more new, than that a man of " Macedon should conquer the Athenians, and give law to " Greece! " Is Philip dead?"—" No—but he is sick." Pray, what

" what is it to you whether Philip is sick or not? supposing " he should die, you would raise up another Philip, if you " continue thus regardless of your interest.

" Many, I know, delight more in nothing than in circulating " all the rumours they hear as articles of intelligence. Some " cry, Philip hath joined with the Lacedæmonians, and they " are concerting the destruction of Thebes. Others assure us, " he hath sent an embassy to the king of Persia; others, that " he is fortifying places in Illyria. Thus we all go about " framing our several tales. I do believe indeed, Athenians! " that he is intoxicated with his greatness, and does entertain " his imagination with many such visionary projects, as he " sees no power rising to oppose him. But I cannot be per-" suaded that he hath so taken his measures, that the weak-" est among us (for the weakest they are who spread such ru-" mours) know what he is next to do. Let us disregard these " tales. Let us only be persuaded of this, that he is our enemy; " that we have long been subject to his insolence; that what-" ever we expected to have been done for us by others, hath " turned against us; that all the resource left, is in ourselves; " and that if we are not inclined to carry our arms abroad, " we shall be forced to engage him at home. Let us be per-" suaded of these things, and then we shall come to a proper " determination, and be no longer guided by rumours. We " need not be solicitous to know what particular events are to " happen. We may be well assured that nothing good can " happen, unless we give due attention to our own affairs, and " act as becomes Athenians.

" Were it a point generally acknowledged* that Philip is " now at actual war with the state, the only thing under de-" liberation would then be, how to oppose him with most " safety. But since there are persons so strangely infatuated, " that, although he has already possessed himself of a consider-" able part of our dominions; although he is still extending his " conquests; although all Greece has suffered by his injustice; " yet they can hear it repeated in this assembly, that it is some " of us who seek to embroil the state in war: this suggestion " must first be guarded against. I readily admit, that were it

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* Phil. iii.

"in our power to determine whether we ſhould be at peace "or war, peace, if it depended on our option, is moſt deſirable "to be embraced. But if the other party hath drawn the "ſword, and gathered his armies round him; if he amuſes "us with the name of peace, while, in fact, he is proceeding "to the greateſt hoſtilities, what is left for us but to oppoſe "him? If any man takes that for a peace, which is only a "preparation for his leading his forces directly upon us, after "his other conqueſts, I hold that man's mind to be diſordered. "At leaſt, it is only our conduct towards Philip, not Philip's "conduct towards us, that is to be termed a peace; and this "is the peace for which Philip's treaſures are expended, for "which his gold is ſo liberally ſcattered among our venal "orators, that he may be at liberty to carry on the war againſt "you, while you make no war on him.

"Heavens! is there any man of a right mind who would "judge of peace or war by words, and not by actions? Is "there any man ſo weak as to imagine that it is for the ſake "of thoſe paltry villages of Thrace, Drongylus, and Cabyle, "and Maſtira, that Philip is now braving the utmoſt dangers, "and enduring the ſeverity of toils and ſeaſons; and that he "has no deſigns upon the arſenals, and the navies, and the "ſilver mines of Athens? or that he will take up his winter "quarters among the cells and dungeons of Thrace, and leave "you to enjoy all your revenues in peace? But you wait, "perhaps, till he declare war againſt you. He will never do ſo: "no, though he were at your gates. He will ſtill be aſſuring "you that he is not at war. Such were his profeſſions to the "people of Oreum, when his forces were in the heart of their "country; ſuch his profeſſions to thoſe of Pheræ, until the "moment he attacked their walls: and thus he amuſed the "Olynthians till he came within a few miles of them, and "then he ſent them a meſſage, that either they muſt quit their "city, or he his kingdom. He would indeed be the abſurdeſt "of mankind, if, while you ſuffer his outrages to paſs unno- "ticed, and are wholly engaged in accuſing and proſecuting "one another, he ſhould, by declaring war, put an end to your "private conteſts, warn you to direct all your zeal againſt him, "and deprive his penſioners of their moſt ſpecious pretence

"for

"for suspending your resolutions, that of his not being at war "with the state. I, for my part, hold and declare, that by his "attack of the Megaræans, by his attempts upon the liberty "of Eubœa, by his late incursions into Thrace, by his prac-"tices in Peloponnesus, Philip has violated the treaty; he is "in a state of hostility with you; unless you shall affirm, that "he who prepares to besiege a city, is still at peace, until the "walls be actually invested. The man whose designs, whose "whole conduct tends to reduce me to subjection, that man "is at war with me, though not a blow hath yet been given, "nor a sword drawn.

"All Greece, all the barbarian world, is too narrow for this "man's ambition. And though we Greeks see and hear all "this, we send no embassies to each other; we express no "resentment; but into such wretchedness are we sunk, that "even to this day, we neglect what our interest and duty "demand. Without engaging in associations, or forming "confederacies, we look with unconcern upon Philip's grow-"ing power; each fondly imagining, that the time in which "another is destroyed, is so much time gained to him; al-"though no man can be ignorant, that, like the regular peri-"odic return of a fever, he is coming upon those who think "themselves the most remote from danger. And what is the "cause of our present passive disposition? For some cause sure "there must be, why the Greeks, who have been so zealous "heretofore in defence of liberty, are now so prone to slavery. "The cause, Athenians! is, that a principle, which was for-"merly fixed in the minds of all, now exists no more; a prin-"ciple which conquered the opulence of Persia; maintained "the freedom of Greece, and triumphed over the powers of "sea and land. That principle was, an unanimous abhor-"rence of all those who accepted bribes from princes, that "were enemies to the liberties of Greece. To be convicted "of bribery, was then a crime altogether unpardonable. Nei-"ther orators, nor generals, would then sell for gold the fa-"vourable conjunctures which fortune put into their hands. "No gold could impair our firm concord at home, our hatred "and diffidence of tyrants and barbarians. But now all things

are

" are exposed to sale, as in a public market. Corruption has " introduced such manners, as have proved the bane and de- " struction of our country. Is a man known to have re- " ceived foreign money? People envy him. Does he own it? " They laugh. Is he convicted in form? They forgive him: " so universally has this contagion diffused itself among us.

" If there be any who, though not carried away by bribes, " yet are struck with terror, as if Philip was something more " than human, they may see, upon a little consideration, that " he hath exhausted all those artifices to which he owes his " present elevation; and that his affairs are now ready to de- " cline. For I myself, Athenians! should think Philip really " to be dreaded, if I saw him raised by honourable means.— " When forces join in harmony and affection, and one com- " mon interest unites confederating powers, then they share " the toils with alacrity, and endure distresses with persever- " ance. But when extravagant ambition, and lawless power, " as in the case of Philip, have aggrandized a single person, " the first pretence, the slightest accident, overthrows him, and " dashes his greatness to the ground. For, it is not possible, " Athenians! it is not possible, to found a lasting power upon " injustice, perjury, and treachery. These may perhaps suc- " ceed for once, and borrow, for a while, from hope, a gay " and a flourishing appearance. But time betrays their weak- " ness, and they fall of themselves to ruin. For, as in struc- " tures of every kind, the lower parts should have the firmest " stability, so the grounds and principles of great enterprizes " should be justice and truth. But this solid foundation is " wanting to all the enterprizes of Philip.

" Hence, among his confederates, there are many who " hate, who distrust, who envy him. If you will exert " yourselves as your honour and your interest require, you " will not only discover the weakness and insincerity of " his confederates, but the ruinous condition also of his own " kingdom. For you are not to imagine, that the inclinations " of his subjects are the same with those of their prince. He " thirsts for glory; but they have no part in this ambition. " Harassed by those various excursions he is ever making,

they

" they groan under perpetual calamity; torn from their business and their families; and beholding commerce excluded from their coasts. All those glaring exploits, which have given him his apparent greatness, have wasted his natural strength, his own kingdom, and rendered it much weaker than it originally was. Besides, his profligacy and baseness, and those troops of buffoons, and dissolute persons, whom he caresses and keeps constantly about him, are, to men of just discernment, great indications of the weakness of his mind. At present, his successes cast a shade over these things; but let his arms meet with the least disgrace, his feebleness will appear, and his character be exposed. For, as in our bodies, while a man is in apparent health, the effect of some inward debility, which has been growing upon him, may, for a time, be concealed; but as soon as it comes the length of disease, all his secret infirmities show themselves, in whatever part of his frame the disorder is lodged: so, in states and monarchies, while they carry on a war abroad, many defects escape the general eye; but, as soon as war reaches their own territory, their infirmities come forth to general observation.

" Fortune has great influence in all human affairs; but I, for my part, should prefer the fortune of Athens, with the least degree of vigour in asserting your cause, to this man's fortune. For we have many better reasons to depend upon the favour of Heaven than this man. But, indeed, he who will not exert his own strength, hath no title to depend either on his friends, or on the gods. Is it at all surprising that he, who is himself ever amidst the labours and dangers of the field; who is every where; whom no opportunity escapes; to whom no season is unfavourable; should be superior to you, who are wholly engaged in contriving delays, and framing decrees, and inquiring after news? The contrary would be much more surprising, if we, who have never hitherto acted as became a state engaged in war, should conquer one who acts, in every instance, with indefatigable vigilance. It is this, Athenians! it is this which gives him all his advantage against you. Philip, constantly surrounded by his troops, and perpetually engaged in projecting his designs,

" can,

"can, in a moment, ſtrike the blow where he pleaſes. But "we, when any accident alarms us, firſt appoint our Tri-"erarchs; then we allow them the exchange by ſubſtitution: "then the ſupplies are conſidered; next, we reſolve to man "our fleet with ſtrangers and foreigners; then find it neceſ-"ſary to ſupply their place ourſelves. In the midſt of theſe "delays, what we are ſailing to defend, the enemy is already "maſter of; for the time of action is ſpent by us in prepar-"ing; and the iſſues of war will not wait for our ſlow and "irreſolute meaſures.

"Conſider then your preſent ſituation, and make ſuch pro-"viſion as the urgent danger requires. Talk not of your ten "thouſands, or your twenty thouſand foreigners; of thoſe "armies which appear ſo magnificent on paper only; great "and terrible in your decrees, in execution weak and contemp-"tible. But let your army be made up chiefly of the native "forces of the ſtate; let it be an Athenian ſtrength to which "you are to truſt; and whomſoever you appoint as general, "let them be entirely under his guidance and authority. For, "ever ſince our armies have been formed of foreigners alone, "their victories have been gained over our allies and confed-"erates only, while our enemies have riſen to an extravagance "of power."

The orator goes on to point out the number of forces which ſhould be raiſed; the places of their deſtination; the ſeaſon of the year in which they ſhould ſet out; and then propoſes in form his motion, as we would call it, or his decree, for the neceſſary ſupply of money, and for aſcertaining the funds from which it ſhould be raiſed. Having finiſhed all that relates to the buſineſs under deliberation, he concludes theſe orations on public affairs, commonly with no longer peroration than the following, which terminates the Firſt Philippic: "I, for my "part, have never, upon any occaſion, choſen to court your "favour, by ſpeaking any thing but what I was convinced "would ſerve you. And, on this occaſion, you have heard "my ſentiments freely declared, without art, and without "reſerve. I ſhould have been pleaſed, indeed, that, as it is "for your advantage to have your true intereſt laid before

"you,

"you, so I might have been assured, that he who layeth it "before you would share the same advantage. But, uncertain as I know the consequence to be with respect to myself, I yet determined to speak, because I was convinced "that these measures, if pursued, must prove beneficial to the "public. And, of all those opinions which shall be offered "to your acceptance, may the gods determine that to be "chosen which will best advance the general welfare!"

These extracts may serve to give some imperfect idea of the manner of Demosthenes. For a juster and more complete one, recourse must be had to the excellent original.

LECTURE XXVIII.

ELOQUENCE OF THE BAR. ANALYSIS OF CICERO's ORATION FOR CLUENTIUS.

I TREATED in the last Lecture, of what is peculiar to the Eloquence of popular assemblies. Much of what was said on that head is applicable to the Eloquence of the Bar, the next great scene of public speaking, to which I now proceed, and my observations upon which, will therefore be the shorter. All, however, that was said in the former Lecture must not be applied to it; and it is of importance, that I begin with showing where the distinction lies.

In the first place, The ends of speaking at the bar, and in popular assemblies, are commonly different. In popular assemblies, the great object is persuasion; the orator aims at determining the hearers to some choice or conduct, as good, fit or useful. For accomplishing this end, it is incumbent on him to apply himself to all the principles of action in our nature; to the passions and to the heart, as well as to the understanding. But, at the bar, conviction is the great object. There, it is not the speaker's business to persuade the judges to what is good or useful, but to show them what is just and true; and of course, it is chiefly, or solely, to the understanding that his Eloquence is addressed. This is a characteristical difference which ought ever to be kept in view.

In the next place, Speakers at the bar address themselves to one, or to a few judges, and these, too, persons generally of age, gravity, and authority of character. There, they have not those advantages which a mixed and numerous assembly affords for employing all the arts of speech, even supposing their subject to admit them. Passion does not rise so easily; the speaker is heard more coolly; he is watched over more severely,

and

and would expose himself to ridicule, by attempting that high vehement tone, which is only proper in speaking to a multitude.

In the last place, The nature and management of the subjects which belong to the bar, require a very different species of oratory from that of popular assemblies. In the latter, the speaker has a much wider range. He is seldom confined to any precise rule; he can fetch his topics from a great variety of quarters; and employ every illustration which his fancy or imagination suggest. But, at the bar, the field of speaking is limited to precise law and statute. Imagination is not allowed to take its scope. The advocate has always lying before him the line, the square, and the compass. These, it is his principal business to be continually applying to the subjects under debate.

For these reasons, it is clear, that the Eloquence of the bar is of a much more limited, more sober and chastened kind, than that of popular assemblies; and for similar reasons, we must beware of considering even the judicial orations of Cicero or Demosthenes, as exact models of the manner of speaking which is adapted to the present state of the bar. It is necessary to warn young lawyers of this; because, though these were pleadings spoken in civil or criminal causes, yet, in fact, the nature of the bar anciently, both in Greece and Rome, allowed a much nearer approach to popular Eloquence, than what it now does. This was owing chiefly to two causes:

First, Because in the ancient judicial orations, strict law was much less an object of attention, than it is become among us. In the days of Demosthenes and Cicero, the municipal statutes were few, simple, and general; and the decision of causes was trusted, in a great measure, to the equity and common sense of the judges. Eloquence, much more than jurisprudence, was the study of those who were to plead causes. Cicero somewhere says, that three months study was sufficient to make any man a complete civilian; nay, it was thought that one might be a good pleader at the bar, who had never studied law at all. For there were among the Romans a set of men called *pragmatici*, whose office it was to give the orator all the law knowledge

edge which the cause he was to plead required, and which he put into that popular form, and dressed up with those colours of Eloquence, that were best fitted for influencing the judges before whom he spoke.

We may observe next, that the civil and criminal judges, both in Greece and Rome, were commonly much more numerous than they are with us, and formed a sort of popular assembly. The renowned tribunal of the Areopagus at Athens consisted of fifty judges at the least.* Some make it to consist of a great many more. When Socrates was condemned, by what court it is uncertain, we are informed that no fewer than 280 voted against him. In Rome, the prætor, who was the proper judge both in civil and criminal causes, named, for every cause of moment, the *Judices Selecti*, as they were called, who were always numerous, and had the office and power of both judge and jury. In the famous cause of Milo, Cicero spoke to fifty-one *Judices Selecti*, and so had the advantage of addressing his whole pleading, not to one or a few learned judges of the point of law, as is the case with us, but to an assembly of Roman citizens. Hence all those arts of popular eloquence, which we find the Roman orator so frequently employing, and probably with much success. Hence tears and commiseration are so often made use of as the instruments of gaining a cause. Hence certain practices, which would be reckoned theatrical among us, were common at the Roman bar; such as introducing not only the accused person dressed in deep mourning, but presenting to the judges his family, and his young children, endeavouring to move them by their cries and tears.

For these reasons, on account of the wide difference between the ancient and modern state of the bar, to which we may add also the difference in the turn of ancient and modern Eloquence, which I formerly took notice of, too strict an imitation of Cicero's manner of pleading would now be extremely injudicious. To great advantage he may still be studied by every speaker at the bar. In the address with which he opens his subject, and the insinuation he employs for gaining the favour

* Vide Potter. Antiq. vol. i. p. 102.

favour of the judges; in the diſtinct arrangement of his facts; in the gracefulneſs of his narration; in the conduct and expoſition of his arguments, he may and he ought to be imitated. A higher pattern cannot be ſet before us; but one who ſhould imitate him alſo in his exaggeration and amplifications, in his diffuſe and pompous declamation and in his attempts, to raiſe paſſion, would now make himſelf almoſt as ridiculous at the bar, as if he ſhould appear there in the *Toga* of a Roman lawyer.

Before I deſcend to more particular directions concerning the Eloquence of the bar, I muſt be allowed to take notice that the foundation of a lawyer's reputation and ſucceſs, muſt always be laid in a profound knowledge of his own profeſſion. Nothing is of ſuch conſequence to him, or deſerves more his deep and ſerious ſtudy. For whatever his abilities as a ſpeaker may be, if his knowledge of the law be reckoned ſuperficial, few will chooſe to commit their cauſe to him. Beſides previous ſtudy, and a proper ſtock of knowledge attained, another thing highly material to the ſucceſs of every pleader, is, a diligent and painful attention to every cauſe with which he is entruſted, ſo as to be thoroughly maſter of all the facts and circumſtances relating to it. On this, the ancient rhetoricans inſiſt with great earneſtneſs, and juſtly repreſent it as a neceſſary baſis to all the Eloquence that can be exerted in pleading. Cicero tells us (under the character of Antonius, in the ſecond book De Oratore) that he always converſed at full length with every client who came to conſult him; that he took care there ſhould be no witneſs to their converſation, in order that his client might explain himſelf more freely; that he was wont to ſtart every objection, and to plead the cauſe of the adverſe party with him, that he might come at the whole truth, and be fully prepared on every point of the buſineſs; and that, after the client had retired, he uſed to balance all the facts with himſelf, under three different characters, his own, that of the judge, and that of the advocate on the oppoſite ſide. He cenſures very ſeverely thoſe of the profeſſion who decline taking ſo much trouble; taxing them not only with ſhameful negligence, but with diſhoneſty and breach of

truſt.

trust.* To the same purpose Quintilian, in the eighth chapter of his last book, delivers a great many excellent rules concerning all the methods which a lawyer should employ for attaining the most thorough knowledge of the cause he is to plead; again and again recommending patience and attention in conversation with clients, and observing very sensibly, "Non "tam obest audire supervacua, quam ignorare necessaria. "Frequenter enim et vulnus, et remedium, in iis orator inveniet "quæ litigatori in nutram partem, habere momentum videbantur."†

Supposing an advocate to be thus prepared, with all the knowledge which the study of the law in general, and of that cause which he is to plead in particular, can furnish him, I must next observe, that Eloquence in pleading is of the highest moment for giving support to a cause. It were altogether wrong to infer, that because the ancient popular and vehement manner of pleading is now in a great measure superseded, there is therefore no room for Eloquence at the bar, and that the study of it is become superfluous. Though the manner of speaking be changed, yet still there is a right and a proper manner, which deserves to be studied as much as ever. Perhaps there is no scene of public speaking where Eloquence is more necessary. For, on other occasions, the subject on which men speak in public, is frequently sufficient, by itself, to interest the hearers. But the dryness and subtilty of the subjects generally agitated at the bar, require more than any other a certain kind of Eloquence in order to command attention; in order to give proper weight to the arguments that are employed, and to prevent any thing which the pleader advances from

* "Equidem soleo dare operam, ut de sua quisque re me ipse doceat; et "nequis alius adsit, quo liberius loquatur; et agere adversarii causam, ut ille "agat suam; et quicquid de sua re cogitaret, in medium proferat. Itaque "cùm ille decessit, tres personas unus sustineo, summâ animi equitate; meam, "adversarii, judicis. Nonnulli dum operam suam multam existimari volunt, "ut toto foro volitare, et a causa ad causam ire videantur, causas dicunt incog-"nitas. In quo est illa quidem magna offensio, vel negligentiæ susceptis rebus, "vel perfidiæ receptis; sed etiam illa, major opinione, quod nemo potest de ea "re quam non novit, non turpissimè dicere."

† "To listen to something that is superfluous can do no hurt; whereas, to "be ignorant of something that is material, may be highly prejudicial. The "advocate will frequently discover the weak side of a cause, and learn, at the "same time, what is the proper defence, from circumstances which, to the "party himself, appeared to be of little or no moment."

from paffing unregarded. The effect of good fpeaking is always very great. There is as much difference in the impreffion made upon the hearers, by a cold, dry, and confufed fpeaker, and that made by one who pleads the fame caufe with elegance, order, and ftrength, as there is between our conception of an object, when it is reprefented to us in a dim light, and when we behold it in a full and clear one.

It is no fmall encouragement to Eloquence at the bar, that of all the liberal profeffions, none gives fairer play to genius and abilities than that of the advocate. He is lefs expofed than fome others, to fuffer by the arts of rivalry, by popular prejudices, or fecret intrigues. He is fure of coming forward according to his merit; for he ftands forth every day to view; he enters the lift boldly with his competitors; every appearance which he makes is an appeal to the public, whofe decifion feldom fails of being juft, becaufe it is impartial. Intereft and friends may fet forward a young pleader with peculiar advantages beyond others, at the beginning; but they can do no more than open the field to him. A reputation refting on thefe affiftances will foon fall. Spectators remark, judges decide, parties watch; and to him will the multitude of clients never fail to refort, who gives the moft approved fpecimens of his knowledge, Eloquence, and induftry.

It muft be laid down for a firft principle, that the Eloquence fuited to the bar, whether in fpeaking or in writing law papers, is of the calm and temperate kind, and connected with clofe reafoning. Sometimes a little play may be allowed to the imagination, in order to enliven a dry fubject, and to give relief to the fatigue of attention; but this liberty muft be taken with a fparing hand. For a florid ftyle, and a fparkling manner, never fail to make the fpeaker be heard with a jealous ear, by the judge. They detract from his weight, and always produce a fufpicion of his failing in foundnefs and ftrength of argument. It is purity and neatnefs of expreffion which is chiefly to be ftudied; a ftyle perfpicuous and proper, which fhall not be needlefsly overcharged with the pedantry of law terms, and where, at the fame time, no affectation fhall appear of avoiding thefe, when they are fuitable and neceffary.

Verbofity

Verboſity is a common fault, of which the gentlemen of this profeſſion are accuſed; and into which the habit of ſpeaking and writing ſo haſtily, and with ſo little preparation, as they are often obliged to do, almoſt unavoidably betrays them. It cannot, therefore, be too much recommended to thoſe who are beginning to practice at the bar, that they ſhould early ſtudy to guard againſt this, while as yet they have full leiſure for preparation. Let them form themſelves, eſpecially in the papers which they write, to the habit of a ſtrong and a correct ſtyle; which expreſſes the ſame thing much better in a few words, than is done by the accumulation of intricate and endleſs periods. If this habit be once acquired, it will become natural to them afterwards, when the multiplicity of buſineſs ſhall force them to compoſe in a more precipitant manner. Whereas, if the practice of a looſe and negligent ſtyle has been ſuffered to become familiar, it will not be in their power, even upon occaſions when they wiſh to make an unuſual effort, to expreſs themſelves with energy and grace.

Diſtinctneſs is a capital property in ſpeaking at the bar. This ſhould be ſhown chiefly in two things; firſt, in ſtating the queſtion; in ſhowing clearly what is the point in debate; what we admit; what we deny; and where the line of diviſion begins between us, and the adverſe party. Next, it ſhould be ſhown in the order and arrangement of all the parts of the pleading. In every ſort of oration, a clear method is of the utmoſt conſequence; but in thoſe embroiled and difficult caſes which belong to the bar, it is almoſt all in all. Too much pains, therefore, cannot be taken in previouſly ſtudying the plan and method. If there be indiſtinctneſs and diſorder there, we can have no ſucceſs in convincing: we leave the whole cauſe in darkneſs.

With reſpect to the conduct of narration and argumentation, I ſhall hereafter make ſeveral remarks, when I come to treat of the component parts of regular oration. I ſhall at preſent only obſerve, that the narration of facts at the bar, ſhould always be as conciſe as the nature of them will admit. Facts are always of the greateſt conſequence to be remembered during the courſe of the pleading; but, if the pleader be tedious in his manner of relating them, and needleſsly circumſtantial,

tial, he lays too great a load upon the memory. Whereas, by cutting off all ſuperfluous circumſtances in his recital, he adds ſtrength to the material facts; he both gives a clearer view of what he relates, and makes the impreſſion of it more laſting. In argumentation, again, I would incline to give ſcope to a more diffuſe manner at the bar, than on ſome other occaſions. For in popular aſſemblies, where the ſubject of debate is often a plain queſtion, arguments, taken from known topics, gain ſtrength by their conciſeneſs. But the obſcurity of law-points frequently requires the arguments to be ſpread out, and placed in different lights, in order to be fully apprehended.

When the pleader comes to refute the arguments employed by his adverſary, he ſhould be on his guard not to do them injuſtice, by diſguiſing, or placing them in a falſe light. The deceit is ſoon diſcovered: it will not fail of being expoſed; and tends to impreſs the judge and the hearers with diſtruſt of the ſpeaker, as one who either wants diſcernment to perceive, or wants fairneſs to admit, the ſtrength of the reaſoning on the other ſide. Whereas, when they ſee that he ſtates, with accuracy and candour, the arguments which have been uſed againſt him, before he proceeds to combat them, a ſtrong prejudice is created in his favour. They are naturally led to think, that he has a clear and full conception of all that can be ſaid on both ſides of the argument; that he has entire confidence in the goodneſs of his own cauſe; and does not attempt to ſupport it by any artifice or concealment. The judge is thereby inclined to receive much more readily, the impreſſions which are given by a ſpeaker, who appears both ſo fair and ſo penetrating. There is no part of the diſcourſe, in which the orator has greater opportunity of ſhowing a maſterly addreſs, than when he ſets himſelf to repreſent the reaſonings of his antagoniſts, in order to refute them.

Wit may ſometimes be of ſervice at the bar, eſpecially in a lively reply, by which we may throw ridicule on ſomething that has been ſaid on the other ſide. But, though the reputation of wit be dazzling to a young pleader, I would never adviſe him to reſt his ſtrength upon this talent. It is not his buſineſs to make an audience laugh, but to convince the

judge; and ſeldom, or never, did any one riſe to eminence in his profeſſion, by being a witty lawyer.

A proper degree of warmth in pleading a cauſe is always of uſe. Though, in ſpeaking to a multitude, greater vehemence be natural; yet in addreſſing ourſelves even to a ſingle man, the warmth which ariſes from ſeriouſneſs and earneſtneſs, is one of the moſt powerful means of perſuading him. An advocate perſonates his client; he has taken upon him the whole charge of his intereſts; he ſtands in his place. It is improper, therefore, and has a bad effect upon the cauſe, if he appears indifferent and unmoved; and few clients will be fond of truſting their intereſts in the hands of a cold ſpeaker.

At the ſame time, he muſt beware of proſtituting his earneſtneſs and ſenſibility ſo much, as to enter with equal warmth into every cauſe that is committed to him, whether it can be ſuppoſed really to excite his zeal or not. There is a dignity of character, which it is of the utmoſt importance for every one in his profeſſion to ſupport. For it muſt never be forgotten, that there is no inſtrument of perſuaſion more powerful, than an opinion of probity and honour in the perſon who undertakes to perſuade.* It is ſcarcely poſſible for any hearer to ſeparate altogether the impreſſion made by the character of him that ſpeaks, from the things that he ſays. However ſecretly and imperceptibly, it will be always lending its weight to one ſide or other; either detracting from, or adding to, the authority and influence of his ſpeech. This opinion of honour and probity muſt therefore be carefully preſerved both by ſome degree of delicacy in the choice of cauſes, and by the manner of conducting them. And though, perhaps, the nature of the profeſſion may render it extremely difficult to carry this delicacy its utmoſt length, yet there are attentions to this point, which, as every good man for virtue's ſake, ſo every prudent man for reputation's ſake, will find to be neceſſary. He will always decline embarking in cauſes that are odious and manifeſtly unjuſt; and, when he ſupports a doubtful cauſe, he will lay the chief ſtreſs upon ſuch arguments as appear to his own judgment

* "Plurimum ad omnia momenti eſt in hoc poſitum, ſi vir bonus creditur. "Sic enim contingit, ut non ſtudium advocati, videatur afferre, ſed pene teſ- "tis fidem."

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ment the moſt tenable; reſerving his zeal and his indignation for caſes where injuſtice and iniquity are flagrant. But of the perſonal qualities and virtues requiſite in public ſpeakers, I ſhall afterwards have occaſion to diſcourſe.

Theſe are the chief directions which have occurred to me concerning the peculiar ſtrain of ſpeaking at the bar. In order to illuſtrate the ſubject farther, I ſhall give a ſhort Analyſis of one of Cicero's pleadings, or judicial orations. I have choſen that, *pro Cluentio*. The celebrated one *pro Milone* is more laboured and ſhowy; but it is too declamatory. That, *pro Cluentio* comes nearer the ſtrain of a modern pleading; and though it has the diſadvantage of being very long, and complicated too in the ſubject, yet it is one of the moſt chaſte, correct and forcible of all Cicero's judicial orations, and well deſerves attention for its conduct.

Avitus Cluentius, a Roman knight of ſplendid family and fortunes, had accuſed his ſtepfather Oppianicus of an attempt to poiſon him. He prevailed in the proſecution; Oppianicus was condemned and baniſhed. But as rumours aroſe of the judges having been corrupted by money in this cauſe, theſe gave occaſion to much popular clamour, and had thrown a heavy odium on Cluentius. Eight years afterwards Oppianicus died. An accuſation was brought againſt Cluentius of having poiſoned him, together with a charge alſo of having bribed the judges in the former trial to condemn him. In this action Cicero defends him. The accuſers were Saſſia, the mother of Cluentius, and widow of Oppianicus, and young Oppianicus, the ſon. Q. Naſo, the prætor, was judge, together with a conſiderable number of *Judices Selecti*.

The introduction of the oration is ſimple and proper, taken from no common-place topic, but from the nature of the cauſe. It begins with taking notice, that the whole oration of the accuſer was divided into two parts.* Theſe two parts were,

* "Animadverte, Judices, omnem accuſatoris orationem in duas diviſam eſſe "partes; quarum altera mihi niti et magnopere confidere videbatur, invediâ "jam inveterata judicii Juniani, altera tantummodo conſuetudinis cauſâ, "timidè et diffidenter attingere rationem veneficii criminum; quâ de re lege "eſt hæc queſtio conſtituta. Itaque mihi certum eſt hanc eandem diſtribu-"tionem invidiæ et criminum ſic in defenſione ſervare, ut omnes intelligant, "nihil me nec ſubterfugere voluiſſe reticendo, nec obſurare dicendo."

were, the charge of having poisoned Oppianicus; on which the accuser, conscious of having no proof, did not lay the stress of his cause; but rested it chiefly on the other charge of formerly corrupting the judges, which was capital in certain cases, by the Roman law. Cicero purposes to follow him in this method, and to apply himself chiefly to the vindication of his client from the latter charge. He makes several proper observations on the danger of judges suffering themselves to be swayed by a popular cry, which often is raised by faction, and directed against the innocent. He acknowledges, that Cluentius had suffered much and long by reproach; on account of what had passed at the former trial; but begs only a patient and attentive hearing, and assures the judges, that he will state every thing relating to that matter so fairly and so clearly, as shall give them entire satisfaction. A great appearance of candour reigns throughout this introduction.

The crimes with which Cluentius were charged, were heinous. A mother accusing her son, and accusing him of such actions, as having first bribed judges to condemn her husband, and having afterwards poisoned him, were circumstances that naturally raised strong prejudices against Cicero's client. The first step, therefore, necessary for the orator, was to remove these prejudices; by shewing what sort of persons Cluentius's mother, and her husband Oppianicus, were; and thereby turning the edge of public indignation against them. The nature of the cause rendered this plan altogether proper, and, in similar situations, it is fit to be imitated. He executes his plan with much eloquence and force; and, in doing it, lays open such a scene of infamy and complicated guilt, as gives a shocking picture of the manners of that age; and such as would seem incredible, did not Cicero refer to the proof that was taken in the former trial, of the facts which he alleges.

Sassia, the mother, appears to have been altogether of an abandoned character. Soon after the death of her first husband, the father of Cluentius, she fell in love with Aurius Melinus, a young man of illustrious birth and great fortune, who was married to her own daughter. She prevailed with him to divorce her daughter, and then she married him her-

self.

ſelf.* This Melinus being afterwards, by the means of Oppianicus, involved in Sylla's proſcription, and put to death; and Saſſia being left, for the ſecond time, a widow, and in a very opulent ſituation, Oppianicus himſelf made his addreſſes to her. She, not ſtartled at the imprudence of the propoſal, nor at the thoughts of marrying one, whoſe hands had been imbrued in her former huſband's blood, objected only, as Cicero ſays, to Oppianicus having two ſons by his preſent wife. Oppianicus removed the objection by having his ſons privately diſpatched; and then, divorcing his wife, the infamous match was concluded between him and Saſſia. Theſe flagrant deeds are painted, as we may well believe, with the higheſt colours of Cicero's Eloquence, which here has a very proper field. Cluentius, as a man of honour, could no longer live on any tolerable terms with a woman, a mother only in the name, who had loaded herſelf and all her family with ſo much diſhonour; and hence, the feud which had ever ſince ſubſiſted between them, and had involved her unfortunate ſon in ſo much trouble and perſecution. As for Oppianicus, Cicero gives a ſort of hiſtory of his life, and a full detail of his crimes; and by what he relates, Oppianicus appears to have been a man daring, fierce, and cruel, inſatiable in avarice and ambition; trained and hardened in all the crimes which thoſe turbulent times of Marius and Sylla's proſcriptions produced: "ſuch a man," ſays our orator, "as in place of being ſurpriſed that he was condemned, you ought rather to wonder that he had eſcaped ſo long."

And now, having prepared the way by all this narration, which is clear and elegant, he enters on the hiſtory of that famous trial in which his client was charged with corrupting the judges. Both Cluentius and Oppianicus were of the city Larinum. In a public conteſt about the rights of the freemen of that city, they had taken oppoſite ſides, which embittered the

misunderſtanding

* "Lectum illum genialem quem biennio ante filiæ ſuæ nubenti ſtraverat, in "eâdem domo ſibi ornari et ſterni, expulſâ atque exturbatâ filiâ jubet. Nubit "genero ſocrus, nullis auſpicibus, funeſtis ominibus omnium. O mulieris ſcelus "incredibile, & præter hanc unam, in omni vita inauditum! O audaciam "ſingularem! non timuiſſe, ſi minus vim Deorum, hominumque famam, at illam "ipſam noctem, faceſque illas nuptiales? non limen cubiculi? non cubile filiæ? "non parietes denique ipſos ſuperiorum teſtes nuptiarum? perfregit ac proſtravit omnia cupiditate & furore; vicit pudorem libido; timorem audacia; rationem amentia." The warmth of Cicero's Eloquence, which this paſſage beautifully exemplifies, is here fully juſtified by the ſubject.

misunderstanding already subsisting between them. Sassia, now the wife of Oppianicus, pushed him on to the destruction of her son, whom she had long hated, as one who was conscious of her crimes; and as Cluentius was known to have made no will, they expected, upon his death, to succeed to his fortune. The plan was formed, therefore, to dispatch him by poison; which, considering their former conduct, is no incredible part of the story. Cluentius was at that time indisposed: the servant of his physician was to be bribed to give him poison, and one Fabricius, an intimate friend of Oppianicus, was employed in the negociation. The servant having made the discovery, Cluentius first prosecuted Scamander, a freedman of Fabricius, in whose custody the poison was found; and afterwards Fabricius, for this attempt upon his life. He prevailed in both actions: and both these persons were condemned by the voices, almost unanimous, of the judges.

Of both these *Prejudicia*, as our author calls them, or previous trials, he gives a very particular account: and rests upon them a great part of his argument, as, in neither of them, there was the least charge or suspicion of any attempt to corrupt the judges. But in both these trials, Oppianicus was pointed at plainly; in both, Scamander and Fabricius, were prosecuted as only the instruments and ministers of his cruel designs. As a natural consequence, therefore, Cluentius immediately afterwards raised a third prosecution against Oppianicus himself, the contriver and author of the whole. It was in this prosecution, that money was said to have been given to the judges; all Rome was filled with the report of it, and the alarm loudly raised, that no man's life or liberty was safe, if such dangerous practices were not checked. By the following arguments, Cicero defends his client against this heavy charge of the *Crimen corrupti Judicii.*

He reasons first, that there was not the least reason to suspect it; seeing the condemnation of Oppianicus was a direct and necessary consequence of the judgments given against Scamander and Fabricius, in the two former trials; trials, that were fair and uncorrupted, to the satisfaction of the whole world. Yet by these, the road was laid clearly open to the detection of Oppianicus's guilt. His instruments and ministers

being

being once condemned, and by the very ſame judges too, nothing could be more abſurd than to raiſe a cry about an innocent perſon being circumvented by bribery, when it was evident, on the contrary, that a guilty perſon was now brought into judgment, under ſuch circumſtances, that unleſs the judges were altogether inconſiſtent with themſelves, it was impoſſible for him to be acquitted.

He reaſons next, that, if in this trial there was any corruption of the judges by money, it was infinitely more probable, that corruption ſhould have proceeded from Oppianicus than from Cluentius. For ſetting aſide the difference of character between the two men, the one fair, the other flagitious; what motive had Cluentius to try ſo odious and dangerous an experiment, as that of bribing judges? Was it not much more likely that he ſhould have had recourſe to this laſt remedy, who ſaw and knew himſelf, and his cauſe, to be in the utmoſt danger, than the other, who had a cauſe clear in itſelf, and of the iſſue of which, in conſequence of the two previous ſentences given by the ſame judges, he had full reaſon to be confident? Was it not much more likely that he ſhould bribe, who had every thing to fear; whoſe life and liberty, and fortune were at ſtake; than he who had already prevailed in a material part of his charge, and who had no further intereſt in the iſſue of the proſecution than as juſtice was concerned?

In the third place, he aſſerts it as a certain fact, that Oppianicus did attempt to bribe the judges; that the corruption in this trial, ſo much complained of, was employed, not by Cluentius, but againſt him. He calls on Titus Attius, the orator on the oppoſite ſide; he challenges him to deny, if he can, or if he dare, that Stalenus, one of the thirty-two *Judices Selecti*, did receive money from Oppianicus; he names the ſum that was given; he names the perſons that were preſent, when, after the trial was over, Stalenus was obliged to refund the bribe. This is a ſtrong fact, and would ſeem quite deciſive. But, unluckily, a very croſs circumſtance occurs here. For this very Stalenus gave his voice to condemn Oppianicus. For this ſtrange incident, Cicero accounts in the following manner: Stalenus, ſays he, known to be a worthleſs man, and accuſtomed before to the like practices, entered into a treaty with

Oppianicus

Oppianicus to bring him off, and demanded for that purpose a certain sum, which he undertook to distribute among a competent number of the other judges. When he was once in possession of the money; when he found a greater treasure, than ever he had been master of, deposited in his empty and wretched habitation, he became very unwilling to part with any of it to his colleagues; and bethought himself of some means by which he could contrive to keep it all to himself. The scheme which he devised for this purpose, was, to promote the condemnation, instead of the acquittal of Oppianicus; as, from a condemned person, he did not apprehend much danger of being called to account, or being obliged to make restitution. In place, therefore, of endeavouring to gain any of his colleagues, he irritated such as he had influence with against Oppianicus, by first promising them money in his name, and afterwards telling them, that Oppianicus had cheated him.* When sentence was to be pronounced, he had taken measures for being absent himself: but being brought by Oppianicus's lawyers from another court, and obliged to give his voice, he found it necessary to lead the way, in condemning the man whose money he had taken, without fulfilling the bargain which he had made with him.

By these plausible facts and reasonings, the character of Cluentius seems in a great measure cleared; and, what Cicero chiefly intended, the odium thrown upon the adverse party. But a difficult part of the orator's business still remained. There were several subsequent decisions of the prætor, the censors, and the senate, against the judges in this cause; which all proceeded, or seemed to proceed, upon this ground of bribery and corruption: for it is plain the suspicion prevailed, that if Oppianicus had given money to Stalenus, Cluentius had outbribed him. To all these decisions, however, Cicero replies with

* "Cum esset egens, sumptuosus, audax, callidus, perfidiosus, & cum domi "suæ, miserrimis in locis, et inanissimis, tantum nummorum positum viderit, ad "omnem malitiam & fraudem versare mentem suam cœpit. "Demne Judicibus? mihi igitur, ipsi præter periculum et infamiam quid quæretur? Siquis "eum forte casus ex periculo eripuerit, nonne reddendum est? præcipitantem "igitur impellamus, inquit, et perditum prosternamus." Capit hoc consilium "ut pecuniam quibusdam judicibus levissimis polliceatur, deinde eam postea "supprimat; ut quoniam graves homines suâ sponte severè judicaturos putabat, hos qui leviores erant, destitutione iratos Oppianico redderet."

with much diſtinctneſs and ſubtilty of argument; though it might be tedious to follow him through all his reaſonings on theſe heads. He ſhows, that the facts were, at that time, very indiſtinctly known; that the deciſions appealed to were haſtily given; that not one of them concluded directly againſt his client; and that ſuch as they were, they were entirely brought about by the inflammatory and factious harangues of Quinctius, the tribune of the people, who had been the agent and advocate of Oppianicus; and who, enraged at the defeat he had ſuſtained, had employed all his tribunitial influence to raiſe a ſtorm againſt the judges who condemned his client.

At length, Cicero comes to reaſon concerning the point of law. The *Crimen Corrupti Judicii*, or the bribing of the judges, was capital. In the famous *Lex Cornelia de Sicariis*, was contained this clauſe (which we find ſtill extant, Pandect. lib. xlviii. Tit. 10, § 1) "Qui judicem corruperit, vel corrumpendum "curaverit, hâc lege teneatur." This cauſe, however, we learn from Cicero, was reſtricted to magiſtrates and ſenators; and as Cluentius was only of the equeſtrian order, he was not, even ſuppoſing him guilty, within the law. Of this Cicero avails himſelf doubly; and as he ſhows here the moſt maſterly addreſs, I ſhall give a ſummary of his pleading on this part of the cauſe: "You," ſays he to the advocate for the perſecutor, "You," "T. Attius, I know, had every where given it out, that I was "to defend my client, not from facts, not upon the footing of "innocence, but by taking advantage merely of the law in his "behalf. Have I done ſo? I appeal to yourſelf. Have I "ſought to cover him behind a legal defence only? On the "contrary, have I not pleaded his cauſe as if he had been a "ſenator, liable, by the Cornelian law, to be capitally convicted; and ſhown, that neither proof nor probable preſumption "lies againſt his innocence? In doing ſo, I muſt acquaint you, "that I have complied with the deſire of Cluentius himſelf. "For when he firſt conſulted me in this cauſe, and when I "informed him that it was clear no action could be brought "againſt him from the Cornelian law, he inſtantly beſought "and obteſted me, that I would not reſt his defence upon that "ground; ſaying, with tears in his eyes, That his reputation "was as dear to him as his life; and that what he ſought, as

"an innocent man, was not only to be absolved from any pen-"alty, but to be acquitted in the opinion of all his fellow-"citizens.

"Hitherto, then, I have pleaded this cause upon his plan. "But my client must forgive me, if now I shall plead it upon "my own. For I should be wanting to myself, and to that "regard which my character and station require me to bear to "the laws of the state, if I should allow any person to be judged "of by a law which does not bind him. You, Attius, indeed, "have told us, that it was a scandal and reproach, that a Ro-"man knight should be exempted from those penalties to which "a senator, for corrupting judges, is liable. But I must tell "you, that it would be a much greater reproach, in a state that "is regulated by law, to depart from the law. What safety "have any of us in our persons, what security for our rights, "if the law shall be set aside? By what title do you, Q. Naso, "sit in that chair, and preside in this judgment? By what "right, T. Attius, do you accuse, or do I defend? Whence "all the solemnity and pomp of judges, and clerks, and officers, "of which this house is full? Does not all proceed from the "law, which regulates the whole departments of the state; "which, as a common bond, holds its members together; and, "like the soul within the body, actuates and directs all the public "functions?* On what ground, then, dare you speak lightly "of the law, or move that, in a criminal trial, judges should "advance one step beyond what it permits them to go? the "wisdom of our ancestors has found, that, as senators and "magistrates enjoy higher dignities, and greater advantages "than other members of the state, the law should also, with "regard to them, be more strict, and the purity and uncorrupt-"edness of their morals be guarded by more severe sanctions. "But if it be your pleasure that this institution should be al-"tered,

* "Ait Attius, indignum esse facinus, si senator Judicio quemquam circum-"venerit, eum legibus teneri: si Eques Romanus hoc idem fecerit, eum non "teneri. Ut tibi concedam hoc indignum esse, tu mihi concedas necesse est "multo esse indignius, in eâ civitate quæ legibus contineatur, discedi legibus. "Hoc nam vinculum est hujus dignitatis qua fruimur in republiquâ. Hoc "fundamentum libertatis; hic fons equitatis; mens et animus, et consilium, et "sententia civitatis posita est in legibus. Ut corpora nostra sine mente, sic "civitas sine lege, suis partibus, ut nervis ac sanguine & membris, uti non "potest. Legum ministri, magistratus; legum interpretes, judices; legum "denique idcirco omnes simus servi, ut liberi esse possimus; Quid est, Q. Naso, "cur tu in hoc loco sedeas?" &c.

"tered, if you wish to have the Cornelian law, concerning "bribery extended to all ranks, then let us join, not in violating "the law, but in proposing to have this alteration made by a "new law. My client, Cluentius, will be the foremost in this "measure, who now, while the old law subsists, rejected its "defence, and required his cause to be pleaded, as if he had "been bound by it. But, though he would not avail himself "of the law, you are bound in justice not to stretch it beyond "its proper limits."

Such is the reasoning of Cicero on this head; eloquent, surely, and strong. As his manner is diffuse, I have greatly abridged it from the original, but have endeavoured to retain its force.

In the latter part of the oration, Cicero treats of the other accusation that was brought against Cluentius, of having poisoned Oppianicus. On this, it appears, his accusers themselves laid small stress; having placed their chief hope in overwhelming Cluentius with the odium of bribery in the former trial; and, therefore, on this part of the cause, Cicero does not dwell long. He shows the improbability of the whole tale, which they related concerning this pretended poisoning, and makes it appear to be altogether destitute of any shadow of proof.

Nothing, therefore, remains but the peroration, or conclusion of the whole. In this, as indeed throughout the whole of this oration, Cicero is uncommonly chaste, and, in the midst of much warmth and earnestness, keeps clear of turgid declamation. The peroration turns on two points; the indignation which the character and conduct of Sassia ought to excite, and the compassion due to a son, persecuted through his whole life by such a mother. He recapitulates the crimes of Sassia; her lewdness, her violation of every decorum, her incestuous marriages, her violence and cruelty. He places, in the most odious light, the eagerness and fury which she had shown in the suit she was carrying on against her son; describes her journey from Larinum to Rome, with a train of attendants, and a great store of money, that she might employ every method for circumventing and oppressing him in this trial; while, in the whole course of her journey, she was so

detested,

detested, as to make a solitude wherever she lodged; she was shunned and avoided by all: her company and her very looks, were reckoned contagious; the house was deemed polluted which was entered into by so abandoned a woman.* To this he opposes the character of Cluentius, fair, unspotted, and respectable. He produces the testimonies of the magistrates of Larinum in his favour, given in the most ample and honourable manner by a public decree, and supported by a great concourse of the most noted inhabitants, who were now present, to second every thing that Cicero could say in favour of Cluentius.

"Wherefore, judges," he concludes, "if you abominate "crimes, stop the triumph of this impious woman, prevent "this most unnatural mother from rejoicing in her son's blood. "If you love virtue and worth, relieve this unfortunate man, "who, for so many years, has been exposed to most unjust "reproach through the calumnies raised against him by Sassia, "Oppianicus, and all their adherents. Better far it had been "for him to have ended his days at once by the poison "which Oppianicus had prepared for him, than to have "escaped those snares, if he must still be oppressed by an odi- "um which I have shown to be so unjust. But in you he "trusts, in your clemency, and your equity, that now, on a "full and fair hearing of his cause, you will restore him to "his honour; you will restore him to his friends and fellow- "citizens, of whose zeal and high estimation of him you have "seen such strong proofs; and will show, by your decision, "that, though faction and calumny may reign for a while in "popular

* "Cùm appropinquare hujus judicium ei nuntiatum est, confestim hic ad- "volavit; ne aut accusatoribus diligentia, aut pecunia testibus deesset; aut ne "forte mater hoc sibi optatissimum spectaculum hujus sordium atque luctus, et "tanti squaloris amitteret. Jam vero quod iter Romam hujus mulieris fuisse "existimatis? Quod ego propter vicinitatem Aquinatium et Venafranorum ex "multis comperi: quos concursus in his oppidis? Quantos et virorum et "mulierum gemitus esse factos? Mulierem quandam Larino, atque illam usque "a mari supero Romam proficisci cum magno comitatu et pecunia, quo facil- "ius circumvenire judicio capitis, atque opprimere filium possit. Nemo erat "illorum, pœne dicam, quin expiandum illum locum esse arbitraretur quacun- "que illa inter fecisset; nemo, quin terram ipsam violari, quæ mater est omni- "um, vestigiis consceleratæ matris putaret. Itaque nullo in oppido consistendi "ei potestas fuit: nemo ex tot hospitibus inventus est qui non contagionem "aspectûs fugeret."

"popular meetings and harangues, in trial and judgment "regard is paid to the truth only."

I have given only a skeleton of this oration of Cicero. What I principally aimed at, was to show his disposition and method; his arrangement of facts, and the conduct and force of some of his main arguments. But, in order to have a full view of the subject, and of the art with which the orator manages it, recourse must be had to the original. Few of Cicero's orations contain a greater variety of facts and argumentations, which renders it difficult to analyze it fully. But for this reason I chose it, as an excellent example of managing at the bar, a complex and intricate cause, with order, elegance, and force.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXIX.

ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.

BEFORE treating of the ſtructure and component parts of a regular oration, I purpoſed making ſome obſervations on the peculiar ſtrain, the diſtinguiſhing characters, of each of the three great kinds of public ſpeaking. I have already treated of the Eloquence of popular aſſemblies, and of the Eloquence of the bar. The ſubject which remains for this Lecture is, the ſtrain and ſpirit of that Eloquence which is ſuited to the pulpit.

Let us begin with conſidering the advantages, and diſadvantages, which belong to this field of public ſpeaking. The pulpit has plainly ſeveral advantages peculiar to itſelf. The dignity and importance of its ſubjects muſt be acknowledged ſuperior to any other. They are ſuch as ought to intereſt every one, and can be brought home to every man's heart; and ſuch as admit, at the ſame time, both the higheſt embelliſhment in deſcribing, and the greateſt vehemence and warmth in enforcing them. The preacher has alſo great advantages in treating his ſubjects. He ſpeaks not to one or a few judges, but to a large aſſembly. He is ſecure from all interruption. He is obliged to no replies, or extemporaneous efforts. He chooſes his theme at leiſure; and comes to the public with all the aſſiſtance which the moſt accurate premeditation can give him.

But, together with theſe advantages, there are alſo peculiar difficulties that attend the Eloquence of the pulpit. The preacher, it is true, has no trouble in contending with an adverſary; but then, debate and contention enliven the genius of men, and procure attention. The pulpit orator is, perhaps, in too quiet poſſeſſion of his field. His ſubjects of diſcourſe are, in themſelves, noble and important; but they are ſubjects

trite

trite and familiar. They have, for ages, employed so many speakers, and so many pens; the public ear is so much accustomed to them, that it requires more than an ordinary power of genius to fix attention. Nothing within the reach of art is more difficult, than to bestow, on what is common, the grace of novelty. No sort of composition whatever is such a trial of skill, as where the merit of it lies wholly in the execution; not in giving any information that is new, not in convincing men of what they did not believe; but in dressing truths which they knew, and of which they were before convinced, in such colours as may most forcibly affect their imagination and heart.* It is to be considered, too, that the subject of the preacher generally confines him to abstract qualities, to virtues and vices; whereas, that of other popular speakers leads them to treat of persons; which is a subject that commonly interests the hearers more, and takes faster hold of the imagination. The preacher's business is solely to make you detest the crime. The pleader's, to make you detest the criminal. He describes a living person; and with more facility rouses your indignation. From these causes, it comes to pass, that though we have a great number of moderately good preachers, we have, however, so few that are singularly eminent. We are still far from perfection in the art of preaching; and perhaps there are few things, in which it is more difficult to excel.

* What I have said on this subject, coincides very much with the observations made by the famous M. Bruyere, in his *Mœurs de Siecle*, when he is comparing the eloquence of the pulpit with that of the bar. "L'Eloquence de la "chaire, en ce qui y entre d'humain, & du talent de l'orateur, est cachée, con-"nue de peu de personnes, & d'une difficile execution. Il fout marcher par "des chemins battus, dire ce qui a été dit, & ce que l'on prevoit que vous "allez dire: les matières sont grandes, mains usées & triviales; les principes "surs, mains dont les auditeurs penetrent les conclusions d'une seule vûe: il "y entre des sujets qui sont sublimes, mais qui peut traiter le sublime?—Le "Prédicateur n'est point soutenu comme l'avocat par des faits toujours "nouveaux, par de differens evénémens, par des avantures inouies; il ne "s'exerce point sur les questions douteuses; il ne fait point valoir les vio-"lentes conjectures, & les presomptions; toutes choses, neanmoins, qui "élevent le génie, lui donnent de la force, & de l'étendue, & qui contraignent "bien moins l'éloquence, qu'elles ne le fixent, & le dirigent. Il doit, au "contraire, tirer son discours d'une source commune, & ou tout le monde "puise; & s'il s'écarte de ces lieux communs, il n'est plus populaire; il est "abstrait ou déclamateur." The inference which he draws from these reflections is very just; "il est plus aisé de prêcher que de plaider; mais plus dif-"ficile de bien prêcher que de bien plaider." Les Caracteres, ou Mœurs de ce Siecle, p. 601.

cel.* The object, however, is noble and worthy, upon many accounts, of being pursued with zeal.

It may perhaps occur to some, that preaching is no proper subject of the art of Eloquence. This, it may be said, belongs only to human studies and inventions: but the truths of religion, with the greater simplicity, and the less mixture of art they are set forth, they are likely to prove the more successful. This objection would have weight, if Eloquence were, as the persons who made such an objection commonly take it to be, an ostentatious and deceitful art, the study of the words and of plausibility only, calculated to please, and to tickle the ear. But against this idea of Eloquence I have all along guarded. True Eloquence is the art of placing truth in the most advantageous light for conviction and persuasion. This is what every good man who preaches the gospel not only may, but ought to have at heart. It is most intimately connected with the success of his ministry; and were it needful, as assuredly it is not, to reason any further on this head, we might refer to the discourses of the prophets and apostles, as models of the most sublime and persuasive Eloquence, adapted both to the imagination and the passions of men.

An essential requisite, in order to preach well, is, to have a just, and at the same time, a fixed and habitual view of the end of preaching. For in no art can any man execute well, who has not a just idea of the end and object of that art. The end of all preaching is, to persuade men to become good. Every sermon, therefore, should be a persuasive oration. Not but that the preacher is to instruct and to teach, to reason and argue. All persuasion, as I showed formerly, is to be founded on conviction.

* What I say here, and in other passages, of our being far from perfection, in the art of preaching, and of there being few who are singularly eminent in it, is to be always understood as referring to an ideal view of the perfection of this art, which none, perhaps, since the days of the apostles, ever did, or ever will reach. But in that degree of the Eloquence of the pulpit, which promotes, in a considerable measure, the great end of edification, and gives a just title to high reputation and esteem, there are many who hold a very honourable rank. I agree entirely in opinion with a candid judge (Dr. Campbell on Rhetoric, B. i. ch. 10.) who observes, that considering how rare the talent of Eloquence is among men, and considering all the disadvantages under which preachers labour, particularly from the frequency of this exercise, joined with the other duties of their office, to which fixed pastors are obliged, there is more reason to wonder that we hear so many instructive, and even Eloquent sermons, than that we hear so few.

viction. The understanding must always be applied to in the first place, in order to make a lasting impression on the heart: and he who would work on men's passions, or influence their practice, without first giving them just principles, and enlightening their minds, is no better than a mere declaimer. He may raise transient emotions, or kindle a passing ardour; but can produce no solid or lasting effect. At the same time, it must be remembered, that all the preacher's instructions are to be of the practical kind; and that persuasion must ever be his ultimate object. It is not to discuss some abstruse point, that he ascends the pulpit. It is not to illustrate some metaphysical truth, or to inform men of something which they never heard before; but it is to make them better men; it is to give them, at once, clear views, and persuasive impressions of religious truth. The Eloquence of the pulpit then, must be popular Eloquence. One of the first qualities of preaching is to be popular; not in the sense of accommodation to the humours and prejudices of the people, (which tends only to make a preacher contemptible) but, in the true sense of the word, calculated to make impression on the people; to strike and to seize their hearts. I scruple not therefore to assert, that the abstract and philosophical manner of preaching, however it may have sometimes been admired, is formed upon a very faulty idea, and deviates widely from the just plan of pulpit Eloquence. Rational, indeed, a preacher ought always to be; he must give his audience clear ideas on every subject, and entertain them with sense, not with sound; but to be an accurate reasoner will be small praise, if he be not a persuasive speaker also.

Now, if this be the proper idea of a sermon, a persuasive oration, one very material consequence follows, that the preacher himself, in order to be successful, must be a good man. In a preceding lecture, I endeavoured to shew, that on no subject can any man be truly eloquent, who does not utter the "veræ "voces ab imo pectore," who does not speak the language of his own conviction and his own feelings. If this holds, as, in my opinion, it does in other kinds of public speaking, it certainly holds in the highest degree in preaching. There, it is of the utmost consequence that the speaker firmly believe both the truth, and the importance of those principles which he incul-

cates on others; and, not only that he believe them speculatively, but have a lively and serious feeling of them. This will always give an earnestness and strength, a fervour of piety to his exhortations, superior in its effects to all the arts of studied Eloquence; and, without it, the assistance of art will seldom be able to conceal the mere declaimer. A spirit of true piety would prove the most effectual guard against those errors which preachers are apt to commit. It would make their discourses solid, cogent, and useful; it would prevent those frivolous and ostentatious harangues, which have no other aim than merely to make a parade of speech, or amuse an audience; and perhaps the difficulty of attaining that pitch of habitual piety and goodness, which the perfection of pulpit Eloquence would require, and of uniting it with that thorough knowledge of the world, and those other talents which are requisite for excelling in the pulpit, is one of the great causes why so few arrive at very high eminence in this sphere.

The chief characteristics of the eloquence suited to the pulpit, as distinguished from the other kinds of public speaking, appear to me to be these two, gravity and warmth. The serious nature of the subjects belonging to the pulpit, requires gravity; their importance to mankind, requires warmth. It is far from being either easy or common to unite these characters of eloquence. The grave, when it is predominant, is apt to run into a dull uniform solemnity. The warm, when it wants gravity, borders on the theatrical and light. The union of the two must be studied by all preachers as of the utmost consequence, both in the composition of their discourses, and in their manner of delivery. Gravity and warmth united, form that character of preaching which the French call *Onction*; the affecting, penetrating, interesting manner, flowing from a strong sensibility of heart in the preacher to the importance of those truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire that they may make full impression on the hearts of his hearers.

Next to a just idea of the nature and object of pulpit Eloquence, the point of greatest importance to a preacher, is a proper choice of the subjects on which he preaches. To give rules for the choice of subjects for sermons, belongs to the theological more than to the rhetorical chair; only in general,

eral, they ſhould be ſuch as appear to the preacher to be the moſt uſeful, and the beſt accommodated to the circumſtances of his audience. No man can be called eloquent, who ſpeaks to an aſſembly on ſubjects, or in a ſtrain, which none or few of them comprehend. The unmeaning applauſe which the ignorant give to what is above their capacity, common ſenſe and common probity muſt teach every man to deſpiſe. Uſefulneſs and true Eloquence always go together; and no man can long be reputed a good preacher who is not acknowledged to be an uſeful one.

The rules which relate to the conduct of the different parts of a ſermon, the introduction, diviſion, argumentative and pathetic parts, I reſerve to be afterwards delivered, when treating of the conduct of a diſcourſe in general; but ſome rules and obſervations, which reſpect a ſermon as a particular ſpecies of compoſition, I ſhall now give, and I hope they may be of ſome uſe.

The firſt which I ſhall mention is, to attend to the unity of a ſermon. Unity indeed is of great conſequence in every compoſition; but in other diſcourſes, where the choice and direction of the ſubject are not left to the ſpeaker, it may be leſs in his power to preſerve it. In a ſermon, it muſt be always the preacher's own fault if he tranſgreſs it. What I mean by unity is, that there ſhould be ſome one main point to which the whole ſtrain of the ſermon ſhall refer. It muſt not be a bundle of different ſubjects ſtrung together, but one object muſt predominate throughout. This rule is founded on what we all experience, that the mind can attend fully only to one capital object at a time. By dividing, you always weaken the impreſſion. Now this unity, without which no ſermon can either have much beauty, or much force, does not require that there ſhould be no diviſions or ſeparate heads in the diſcourſe, or that one ſingle thought only ſhould be, again and again, turned up to the hearers in different lights. It is not to be underſtood in ſo narrow a ſenſe: it admits of ſome variety; it admits of underparts and appendages, provided always that ſo much union and connexion be preſerved, as to make the whole concur in ſome one impreſſion upon the mind. I may employ, for inſtance, ſeveral different arguments to enforce the love of God;

God; I may alſo inquire, perhaps, into the cauſes of the decay of this virtue; ſtill one great object is preſented to the mind; but if, becauſe my text ſays, "He that loveth God muſt love "his brother alſo," I ſhould, therefore, mingle in one diſcourſe arguments for the love of God and for the love of our neighbour, I ſhould offend unpardonably againſt unity, and leave a very looſe and confuſed impreſſion on the hearers' minds.

In the ſecond place, Sermons are always the more ſtriking, and commonly the more uſeful, the more preciſe and particular the ſubject of them be. This follows, in a great meaſure, from what I was juſt now illuſtrating. Though a general ſubject is capable of being conducted with a conſiderable degree of unity, yet that unity can never be ſo complete as in a particular one. The impreſſion made muſt always be more undeterminate; and the inſtruction conveyed, will commonly, too, be leſs direct and convincing. General ſubjects, indeed, ſuch as the excellency or the pleaſures of religion, are often choſen by young preachers, as the moſt ſhowy, and the eaſieſt to be handled; and, doubtleſs, general views of religion are not to be neglected, as on ſeveral occaſions they have great propriety. But theſe are not the ſubjects moſt favourable for producing the high effects of preaching. They fall in almoſt unavoidably with the beaten tract of common-place thought. Attention is much more commanded by ſeizing ſome particular view of a great ſubject, ſome ſingle intereſting topic, and directing to that point the whole force of argument and Eloquence. To recommend ſome one grace or virtue, or inveigh againſt a particular vice, furniſhes a ſubject not deficient in unity or preciſion; but if we confine ourſelves to that virtue or vice as aſſuming a particular aſpect, and conſider it as it appears in certain characters, or affects certain ſituations in life, the ſubject becomes ſtill more intereſting. The execution is, I admit, more difficult, but the merit and the effect are higher.

In the third place, Never ſtudy to ſay all that can be ſaid upon a ſubject; no error is greater than this. Select the moſt uſeful, the moſt ſtriking and perſuaſive topics which the text ſuggeſts, and reſt the diſcourſe upon theſe. If the doctrines which miniſters of the Goſpel preach were altogether new to their hearers, it might be requiſite for them to be exceeding

full

full on every particular, left there ſhould be any hazard of their not affording complete information. But it is much leſs for the ſake of information than of perſuaſion, that diſcourſes are delivered from the pulpit; and nothing is more oppoſite to perſuaſion, than an unneceſſary and tedious fulneſs. There are always ſome things which the preacher may ſuppoſe to be known, and ſome things which he may only ſlightly touch. If he ſeek to omit nothing which his ſubject ſuggeſts, it will unavoidably happen that he will encumber it, and weaken its force.

In ſtudying a ſermon, he ought to place himſelf in the ſituation of a ſerious hearer. Let him ſuppoſe the ſubject addreſſed to himſelf: let him conſider what views of it would ſtrike him moſt; what arguments would be moſt likely to perſuade him; what parts of it would dwell moſt upon his mind. Let theſe be employed as his principal materials; and in theſe, it is moſt likely his genius will exert itſelf with the greateſt vigour. The ſpinning and wire-drawing mode, which is not uncommon among preachers, enervates the nobleſt truths. It may indeed be a conſequence of obſerving the rule which I am now giving, that fewer ſermons will be preached upon one text than is ſometimes done; but this will, in my opinion, be attended with no diſadvantage. I know no benefit that ariſes from introducing a whole ſyſtem of religious truth under every text. The ſimpleſt and moſt natural method by far, is to choose that view of a ſubject to which the text principally leads, and to dwell no longer on the text, than is ſufficient for diſcuſſing the ſubject in that view, which can commonly be done, with ſufficient profoundneſs and diſtinctneſs in one or a few diſcourſes: for it is a very falſe notion to imagine, that they always preach the moſt profoundly, or go the deepeſt into a ſubject, who dwell on it the longeſt. On the contrary, that tedious circuit, which ſome are ready to take in all their illuſtrations, is very frequently owing, either to their want of diſcernment for perceiving what is moſt important in the ſubject; or to their want of ability for placing it in the moſt proper point of view.

In the fourth place, Study above all things to render your inſtructions intereſting to the hearers. This is the great trial and mark of true genius for the Eloquence of the pulpit: for nothing

nothing is so fatal to success in preaching, as a dry manner. A dry sermon can never be a good one. In order to preach in an interesting manner, much will depend upon the delivery of a discourse; for the manner in which a man speaks, is of the utmost consequence for affecting his audience, but much will also depend on the composition of the discourse. Correct language, and elegant description, are but the secondary instruments of preaching in an interesting manner. The great secret lies, in bringing home all that is spoken to the hearts of the hearers, so as to make every man think that the preacher is addressing him in particular. For this end, let him avoid all intricate reasonings; avoid expressing himself in general speculative propositions, or laying down practical truths in an abstract metaphysical manner. As much as possible, the discourse ought to be carried on in the strain of direct address to the audience; not in the strain of one writing an essay, but of one speaking to a multitude, and studying to mix what is called application, or what has an immediate reference to practice, with the doctrinal and didactic parts of the sermon.

It will be of much advantage to keep always in view the different ages, characters, and conditions of men, and to accommodate directions and exhortations to these different classes of hearers. Whenever you bring forth what a man feels to touch his own character, or to suit his own circumstances, you are sure of interesting him. No study is more necessary for this purpose, than the study of human life, and the human heart. To be able to unfold the heart, and to discover a man to himself, in a light in which he never saw his own character before, produces a wonderful effect. As long as the preacher hovers in a cloud of general observations, and descends not to trace the particular lines and features of manners, the audience are apt to think themselves unconcerned in the description. It is the striking accuracy of moral characters that gives the chief power and effect to a preacher's discourse. Hence, examples founded on historical facts, and drawn from real life, of which kind the scriptures afford many, always, when they are well chosen, command high attention. No favourable opportunity of introducing these should be omitted. They correct, in some degree, that disadvantage to which I before observed preaching

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is ſubject, of being confined to treat of qualities in the abſtract, not of perſons, and place the weight and reality of religious truths in the moſt convincing light. Perhaps the moſt beautiful, and among the moſt uſeful ſermons of any, though, indeed the moſt difficult in compoſition, are ſuch as are wholly characteriſtical, or founded on the illuſtration of ſome peculiar character, or remarkable piece of hiſtory, in the ſacred writings; by purſuing which, one can trace, and lay open, ſome of the moſt ſecret windings of man's heart. Other topics of preaching have been much beaten; but this is a field, which, wide in itſelf, has hitherto been little explored by the compoſers of ſermons, and poſſeſſes all the advantages of being curious, new, and highly uſeful. Biſhop Butler's ſermon on the *Character of Balaam*, will give an idea of that ſort of preaching which I have in my eye.

In the fifth and laſt place, Let me add a caution againſt taking the model of preaching from particular faſhions that chance to have the vogue. Theſe are torrents that ſwell to-day, and have ſpent themſelves by to-morrow. Sometimes it is the taſte of poetical preaching, ſometimes of philoſophical, that has the faſhion on its ſide; at one time it muſt be all pathetic, at another time all argumentative, according as ſome celebrated preacher has ſet the example. Each of theſe modes, in the extreme, is very faulty; and he who conforms himſelf to it, will both cramp genius, and corrupt it. It is the univerſal taſte of mankind which is ſubject to no ſuch changing modes, that alone is entitled to poſſeſs any authority; and this will never give its ſanction to any ſtrain of preaching, but what is founded on human nature, connected with uſefulneſs, adapted to the proper idea of a ſermon, as a ſerious perſuaſive oration, delivered to a multitude, in order to make them better men. Let a preacher form himſelf upon this ſtandard, and keep it cloſe in his eye, and he will be in a much ſurer road to reputation, and ſucceſs at laſt, than by a ſervile compliance with any popular taſte, or tranſient humour of his hearers. Truth and good ſenſe are firm, and will eſtabliſh themſelves; mode and humour are feeble and fluctuating. Let him never follow, implicitly, any one example; or become a ſervile imitator of any preacher, however much admired. From various examples,

ples, he may pick up much for his improvement; some he may prefer to the rest: but the servility of imitation extinguishes all genius, or rather is a proof of the entire want of genius.

With respect to style, that which the pulpit requires, must certainly, in the first place, be very perspicuous. As discourses spoken there, are calculated for the instruction of all sorts of hearers, plainness and simplicity should reign in them. All unusual, swoln, or high-sounding words, should be avoided; especially all words that are merely poetical, or merely philosophical. Young preachers are apt to be caught with the glare of these; and in young composers the error may be excusable; but they may be assured that it is an error, and proceeds from their not having yet acquired a correct taste. Dignity of expression, indeed, the pulpit requires in a high degree, nothing that is mean or grovelling, no low or vulgar phrases, ought on any account to be admitted. But this dignity is perfectly consistent with simplicity. The words employed may be all plain words, easily understood, and in common use; and yet the style may be abundantly dignified, and at the same time very lively and animated. For a lively animated style is extremely suited to the pulpit. The earnestness which a preacher ought to feel, and the grandeur and importance of his subjects, justify, and often require warm and glowing expressions. He not only may employ metaphors and comparisons, but on proper occasions, may apostrophise the saint or the sinner; may personify inanimate objects, break out into bold exclamations, and, in general, has the command of the most passionate figures of speech. But on this subject, of the proper use and management of figures, I have insisted so fully in former lectures, that I have no occasion now to give particular directions; unless it be only to recall to mind that most capital rule, never to employ strong figures, or a pathetic style, except in cases where the subject leads to them, and where the speaker is impelled to the use of them by native unaffected warmth.

The language of sacred scripture, properly employed, is a great ornament to sermons. It may be employed, either in the way of quotation, or allusion. Direct quotations, brought from scripture, in order to support what the preacher inculcates, both give authority to his doctrine, and render his discourse more

more solemn and venerable. Allusions to remarkable passages, or expressions of scripture, when introduced with propriety, have generally a pleasing effect. They afford the preacher a fund of metaphorical expression, which no other composition enjoys, and by means of which he can vary and enliven his style. But he must take care that any such allusions be natural and easy; for if they seem forced, they approach to the nature of conceits.*

In a sermon, no points or conceits should appear, no affected smartness and quaintness of expression. These derogate much from the dignity of the pulpit; and give to a preacher that air of foppishness, which he ought, above all things, to shun. It is rather a strong expressive style, than a sparkling one, that is to be studied. But we must beware of imagining, that we render style strong and expressive, by a constant and multiplied use of epithets. This is a great error. Epithets have often great beauty and force. But if we introduce them into every sentence, and string many of them together to one object, in place of strengthening, we clog and enfeeble style; in place of illustrating the image, we render it confused and indistinct. He that tells me, "of this perishing, mutable and transitory "world;" by all these three epithets, does not give me so strong an idea of what he would convey, as if he had used one of them with propriety. I conclude this head with an advice, never to have what may be called a favourite expression; for it shews affectation, and becomes disgusting. Let not any expression, which is remarkable for its lustre or beauty, occur twice in the same

* Bishop Sherlock, when showing, that the views of reason have been enlarged, and the principles of natural religion illustrated by the discoveries of Christianity, attacks unbelievers for the abuse they make of these advantages, in the following manner: "What a return do we make for those blessings we "have received? How disrespectfully do we treat the Gospel of Christ, to "which we owe that clear light both of reason and nature, which we now en-"joy, when we endeavour to set up reason and nature in opposition to it? "ought the *withered hand*, which Christ has restored and made whole, to be "lifted up against him?" Vol. i. Disc. i. This allusion to a noted miracle of our Lord's, appears to me happy and elegant. Dr. Seed is remarkably fond of allusions to Scripture style; but he sometimes employs such as are too strained and fanciful. As when he says (Serm. iv.) "No one great virtue will come "single; the virtues *that be her fellows will bear her company with joy and glad-"ness*." Alluding to a passage in the XLVth Psalm, which relates to the virgins, the companions of the king's daughter. And (Serm. xiii.) having said, that the universities have justly been called the eyes of the nation, he adds, "and *if the eyes* of the nation *be evil, the whole body of it must be full of darkness*."

ſame diſcourſe. The repetition of it betrays a fondneſs to ſhine, and, at the ſame time, carries the appearance of barren invention.

As to the queſtion, whether it be moſt proper to write ſermons fully, and commit them accurately to memory, or to ſtudy only the matter and thoughts, and truſt the expreſſion, in part at leaſt to the delivery? I am of opinion, that no univerſal rule can here be given. The choice of either of theſe methods muſt be left to preachers, according to their different genius. The expreſſions which come warm and glowing from the mind, during the fervour of pronunciation, will often have a ſuperior grace and energy, to thoſe which are ſtudied in the retirement of the cloſet. But then, this fluency and power of expreſſion cannot, at all times, be depended upon, even by thoſe of the readieſt genius; and by many can at no time be commanded, when overawed by the preſence of an audience. It is proper therefore to begin, at leaſt, the practice of preaching, with writing as accurately as poſſible. This is abſolutely neceſſary in the beginning, in order to acquire the power and habit of correct ſpeaking, nay, alſo of correct thinking, upon religious ſubjects. I am inclined to go further, and to ſay, that it is proper not only to begin thus, but alſo to continue, as long as the habits of induſtry laſt, in the practice both of writing, and committing to memory. Relaxation in this particular is ſo common, and ſo ready to grow upon moſt ſpeakers in the pulpit, that there is little occaſion for giving any cautions againſt the extreme of overdoing in accuracy.

Of pronunciation or delivery, I am hereafter to treat apart. All that I ſhall now ſay upon this head is, that the practice of reading ſermons, is one of the greateſt obſtacles to the Eloquence of the pulpit in Great Britain, where alone this practice prevails. No diſcourſe, which is deſigned to be perſuaſive, can have the ſame force when read, as when ſpoken. The common people all feel this, and their prejudice againſt this practice is not without foundation in nature. What is gained thereby in point of correctneſs, is not equal, I apprehend, to what is loſt in point of perſuaſion and force. They, whoſe memories are not able to retain the whole of a diſcourſe, might aid themſelves conſiderably by ſhort notes lying before them,

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which would allow them to preserve, in a great measure, the freedom and ease of one who speaks.

The French and English writers of sermons proceed upon very different ideas of the Eloquence of the pulpit; and seem indeed to have split it betwixt them. A French sermon, is for most part a warm animated exhortation; an English one, is a piece of cool instructive reasoning. The French preachers address themselves chiefly to the imagination and the passions; the English, almost solely to the understanding. It is the union of these two kinds of composition, of the French earnestness and warmth, with the English accuracy and reason, that would form, according to my idea, the model of a perfect sermon. A French sermon would sound in our ears as a florid, and, often, as an enthusiastic, harangue. The censure which, in fact, the French critics pass on the English preachers is, that they are philosophers and logicians, but not orators.* The defects of most of the French sermons are these: from a mode that prevails among them of taking their texts from the lesson of the day, the connexion of the text with the subject is often unnatural and forced; † their applications of scripture are fanciful rather than instructive; their method is stiff, and cramped, by their practice of dividing their subject always either into three, or two main points; and their composition is in general too diffuse, and consists rather of a very few thoughts spread out, and highly wrought up, than of a rich variety of sentiments. Admitting, however, all these defects, it cannot be denied, that their sermons are formed upon the idea of a persuasive popular oration; and therefore I am of opinion, they may be read with benefit.

Among the French protestant divines, Saurin is the most distinguished: he is copious, eloquent, and devout, though too ostentatious

* "Les Sermons sont suivant notre methode, de vrais discours oratoires; & "non pas, comme chez les Anglois, des discussions metaphysiques plus convenables à une Academie, qu'aux Assemblies populaires qui se forment dans nos "temples, et qu'il s'agit d'instruire des devoirs du Chrétianisme, d'encourager, "de consoler, d'edifier."

Rhetorique Françoise, par. M. Crevier, Tome I. p. 134.

† One of Massillon's best Sermons, that on the coldness and languor with which Christians perform the duties of religion, is preached from Luke iv. 18. *And he arose out of the Synagogue, and entered into Simon's house; and Simon's wife's mother was taken ill with a great fever.*

ostentatious in his manner. Among the Roman Catholics, the two most eminent, are Bourdaloue and Massillon. It is a subject of dispute among the French critics, to which of these the preference is due, and each of them have their several partizans. To Bourdaloue, they attribute more solidity and close reasoning; to Massillon, a more pleasing and engaging manner. Bourdaloue is indeed a great reasoner, and inculcates his doctrines with much zeal, piety, and earnestness; but his style is verbose, he is disagreeably full of quotations from the fathers, and he wants imagination. Massillon has more grace, more sentiment, and, in my opinion, every way more genius. He discovers much knowledge both of the world and of the human heart; he is pathetic and persuasive; and, upon the whole, is perhaps, the most eloquent writer of sermons which modern times have produced.*

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* In order to give an idea of that kind of Eloquence which is employed, by the French preachers, I shall insert a passage from Massillon, which, in the Encyclopedie, (Article, Eloquence) is extolled by Voltaire, who was the Author of that article, as a chef d'œuvre, equal to any thing of which either ancient or modern times can boast. The subject of the sermon is, the small number of those who shall be saved. The strain of the whole discourse is extremely serious and animated; but when the orator came to the passage which follows, Voltaire informs us, that the whole assembly were moved; that by a sort of involuntary motion, they started up from their seats, and that such murmurs of surprise and acclamation arose as disconcerted the speaker, though they increased the effect of his discourse.

"Je m'arrête à vous, mes frères, qui êtes ici assemblés. Je ne parle plus du "reste des hommes; je vous regarde comme si vous étiez seuls sur la terre: "voici la pensée qui m'occupe & qui m'épouvante. Je suppose que c'est ici "votre derniere heure, et la fin de l'univers; que les cieux vont s'ouvrir sur "vos têtes, Jesus Christ paroitre dans sa gloire au milieu de ce temple, et que "vous n'y êtes assemblés que pour l'attendre, comme des criminels tremblans, "à qui l'on va prononcer, ou une sentence de grace, ou un arrêt de mort "éternelle. Car vous avez beau vous flater; veus mourez tels que vons ètes "aujourd'hui. Tous ces désirs de changement qui vous amusent, vous amuse-"ront jusqu'au lit de la mort; c'est l'expérience de tous les siècles. Tout ce "que vous trouverez alors en vous de nouveau, sera peut être un compte plus "grand que celui que vous auriez aujourd'hui à rendre: et sur ce que vous "seriez, si l'on venoit vous juger dans ce moment, vous pouvez presque decider "ce qui vous arrivera au sortir de la vie.

"Or je vous le demande, et je vous le demande frappé de terreur, ne separant "pas en ce point mon sort du votre, et me mettant dans la même disposition, "où je souhaite que vous entriez; je vous demande, donc, si Jesus Christ "paroissoit dans ce temple, au milieu de cette assemblée la plus auguste de "l'univers, pour nous juger, pour faire le terrible discernement des boues et des "brebis, croyez vous que le plus grand nombre de tout ce que nous sommes "ici, fut placé à la droite? Croyez vous que les choses du moins fussent ega-"les? croyez vous qu'il s'y trouvât seulement dix justes, que le Seigneur ne "peut trouver autrefois en cinq villes toutes entières? Je vous le demande; "vous l'ignorez, et je l'ignore moi-meme. Vous seul, O mon Dieu! connoissez

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During the period that preceded the reſtoration of king Charles II. the ſermons of the Engliſh divines abounded with ſcholaſtic caſuiſtical theology. They were full of minute diviſions and ſubdiviſions, and ſcraps of learning in the didactic part; but to theſe were joined very warm pathetic addreſſes to the conſciences of the hearers, in the applicatory part of the ſermon. Upon the reſtoration, preaching aſſumed a more correct and poliſhed form. It became diſencumbered from the pedantry and ſcholaſtic diviſions of the ſectaries; but it threw out alſo their warm and pathetic addreſſes, and eſtabliſhed itſelf wholly upon the model of cool reaſoning, and rational inſtruction. As the diſſenters from the church continued to preſerve ſomewhat of the old ſtrain of preaching, this led the eſtabliſhed clergy to depart the farther from it. Whatever was earneſt and paſſionate, either in the compoſition or delivery of ſermons, was reckoned enthuſiaſtic and fanatical; and hence that argumentative manner, bordering on the dry and unperſuaſive, which is too generally the character of Engliſh ſermons. Nothing can be more correct upon that model than many of them are; but the model itſelf on which they

"ceux qui vous appartiennent.—Mes frères, notre perte eſt preſque aſſurée, "et nous n'y penſons pas. Quand même dans cette terrible ſeparation qui ſe "fera un jour, il ne devroit y avoir qu'un ſeul pêcheur de cette aſſemblée du "côté des réprouvés, et qu'une voix du ciel viendroit nous en aſſurer dans ce "temple, ſans le deſigner; qui de nous ne craindroit d'être de malheureux; "qui de nous ne retomberoit d'abord, ſur ſa conſcience, pour examiner ſi ſes "crimes n'ont pas méritez ce châtiment? qui de nous, ſaili de frayeur, ne "demanderoit pas à Jeſus Chriſt comme autrefois les Apôtres; Seigneur, ne "ſeroit-ce pas moi? Sommes nous ſages, mes chers Auditeurs? peut-être que "parmi tous ceux qui m'entendent, il ne ſe trouvera pas dix juſtes; peut-être "s'en trouvera-t-il encore moins. Que ſai-je, O mon Dieu! je n'ôſe regarder "d'un œil fixe les abiſmes de vos jugemens, et de votre juſtice; peut-être ne "s'en trouvera-t-il qu'un ſeul; et ce danger ne vous touche point, mon cher "Auditeur? et vous croyez être ce ſeul heureux dans le grand nombre qui "perira? vous qui avez moins ſujet de la croire que tout autre; vous ſur qui "ſeul la ſentence de mort devroit tomber. Grand Dieu! que l'on connoit peu "dans le monde les terreurs de votre loi, &c." After this awakening and alarming exhortation, the orator comes with propriety to this practical improvement: "Mais que conclure de ces grandes verités? qu'il faut deſeſperer "de ſon ſalut? à Dieu ne plaiſe; il n'y a que l'impie, qui pour ſe calmer ſur "ſes diſordres, tache ici de conclure en ſecret que tous les hommes periront "comme lui; ce ne doit pas être là le fruit de ce diſcours. Mais de vous "detromper de cette erreur ſi univerſelle, qu'on peut faire ce que tous les "autres font; et que l'uſage eſt une voie ſure; mais de vous convaincre que "pour ſe ſauver, il faut ſe diſtinguer des autres; être ſingulier, vivre à part au "milieu du monde, et ne pas reſſembler à la foule."

Sermons de Massillon, Vol. IV.

they are formed, is a confined and imperfect one. Dr. Clark, for instance, every where abounds in good ſenſe, and the moſt clear and accurate reaſoning; his applications of ſcripture are pertinent; his ſtyle is always perſpicuous, and often elegant; he inſtructs and he convinces; in what then is he deficient? In nothing, except in the power of intereſting and ſeizing the heart. He ſhows you what you ought to do; but he excites not the deſire of doing it: he treats man as if he were a being of pure intellect, without imagination or paſſions. Archbiſhop Tillotſon's manner is more free and warm, and he approaches nearer than moſt of the Engliſh divines to the character of popular ſpeaking. Hence he is, to this day, one of the beſt models we have for preaching. We muſt not indeed conſider him in the light of a perfect orator: his compoſition is too looſe and remiſs; his ſtyle too feeble, and frequently too flat, to deſerve that high character; but there is in ſome of his ſermons ſo much warmth and earneſtneſs, and through them all there runs ſo much eaſe and perſpicuity, ſuch a vein of good ſenſe and ſincere piety, as juſtly entitle him to be held as eminent a preacher as England has produced.

In Dr. Barrow, one admires more the prodigious fecundity of his invention, and the uncommon ſtrength and force of his conceptions, than the felicity of his execution, or his talent in compoſition. We ſee a genius far ſurpaſſing the common, peculiar indeed almoſt to himſelf; but that genius often ſhooting wild and unchaſtiſed by any diſcipline or ſtudy of Eloquence.

I cannot attempt to give particular characters of that great number of writers of ſermons which this, and the former age, have produced, among whom we meet with a variety of the moſt reſpectable names. We find in their compoſition much that deſerves praiſe; a great diſplay of abilities of different kinds, much good ſenſe and piety, ſtrong reaſoning, ſound divinity, and uſeful inſtruction; though in general the degree of Eloquence bears not, perhaps, equal proportion to the goodneſs of the matter. Biſhop Atterbury deſerves being particularly mentioned as a model of correct and beautiful ſtyle, beſides having the merit of a warmer and more eloquent ſtrain of writing, in ſome of his ſermons, than is commonly met with. Had Biſhop Butler, in place of abſtract philoſophical eſſays, given us more ſermons,

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in the ſtrain of thoſe two excellent ones which he has compoſed upon ſelf deceit, and upon the character of Balaam, we would then have pointed him out as diſtinguiſhed for that ſpecies of characteriſtical ſermons which I before recommended.

Though the writings of the Engliſh divines are very proper to be read by ſuch as are deſigned for the church, I muſt caution them againſt making too much uſe of them, or tranſcribing large paſſages from them into the ſermons they compoſe. Such as once indulge themſelves in this practice, will never have any fund of their own. Infinitely better it is, to venture into the public with thoughts and expreſſions which have occurred to themſelves, though of inferior beauty, than to disfigure their compoſitions, by borrowed and ill-ſorted ornaments, which, to a judicious eye, will be always in hazard of diſcovering their own poverty. When a preacher ſits down to write on any ſubject, never let him begin with ſeeking to conſult all who have written on the ſame text, or ſubject. This, if he conſult many, will throw perplexity and confuſion into his ideas; and, if he conſults only one, will often warp him inſenſibly into his method, whether it be right or not. But let him begin with pondering the ſubject in his own thoughts; let him endeavour to fetch materials from within; to collect and arrange his ideas; and form ſome ſort of plan to himſelf; which it is always proper to put down in writing. Then, and not till then, he may inquire how others have treated the ſame ſubject. By this means, the method and the leading thoughts in the ſermon are likely to be his own. Theſe thoughts he may improve, by comparing them with the tract of ſentiment which others have purſued; ſome of their ſenſe he may, without blame, incorporate into his compoſition; retaining always his own words and ſtyle. This is fair aſſiſtance: all beyond is plagiariſm.

On the whole, never let the principle, with which we ſet out at firſt, be forgotten, to keep cloſe in view, the great end for which a preacher mounts the pulpit; even to infuſe good diſpoſitions into his hearers, to perſuade them to ſerve God, and to become better men. Let this always dwell on his mind when he is compoſing, and it will diffuſe through his compoſitions, that ſpirit which will render them at once eſteemed,

ed, and useful. The most useful preacher is always the best, and will not fail of being esteemed so. Embellish truth only, with a view to gain it the more full and free admission into your hearers' minds; and your ornaments will, in that case, be simple, masculine, natural. The best applause by far, which a preacher can receive, arises from the serious and deep impressions which his discourse leaves on those who hear it. The finest encomium, perhaps, ever bestowed on a preacher, was given by Louis XIV. to the eloquent Bishop of Clermont, Father Massillon, whom I before mentioned with so much praise. After hearing him preach at Versailles, he said to him, "Father, "I have heard many great orators in this chapel; I have been "highly pleased with them; but for you, whenever I hear you, "I go away displeased with myself; for I see more of my "own character."

LECTURE

LECTURE XXX.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF A SERMON OF BISHOP ATTERBURY's.

THE last Lecture was employed in observations on the peculiar and distinguishing characters of the Eloquence proper for the pulpit. But as rules and directions, when delivered in the abstract, are never so useful as when they are illustrated by particular instances, it may, perhaps, be of some benefit to those who are designed for the church, that I should analyze an English sermon, and consider the matter of it, together with the manner. For this purpose, I have chosen Bishop Atterbury as my example, who is deservedly accounted one of our most eloquent writers of sermons, and whom I mentioned as such in the last Lecture. At the same time, he is more distinguished for elegance and purity of expression, than for profoundness of thought. His style, though sometimes careless, is, upon the whole, neat and chaste; and more beautiful than that of most writers of sermons. In his sentiments he is not only rational, but pious and devotional, which is a great excellency. The sermon which I have singled out, is, that upon praise and thanksgiving, the first sermon of the first volume, which is reckoned one of his best. In examining it, it is necessary that I should use full liberty, and together with the beauties, point out any defects that occur to me in the matter, as well as in the style.

PSALM l. 14. *Offer unto God Thanksgiving.*

" Among the many excellencies of this pious collection of
" hymns, for which so particular a value hath been set upon it
" by the church of God in all ages, this is not the least, that
" the true price of duties is there justly stated; men are called
" off from resting in the outward shew of religion, in ceremo-

"nies and ritual observances; and taught, rather to practise "(that which was shadowed out by these rites, and to which "they are designed to lead) sound inward piety and virtue.

"The several composers of these hymns were *prophets*; "persons, whose business it was not only to foretel events, "for the benefit of the church in succeeding times, but to "correct and reform also what was amiss among that race of "men, with whom they lived and conversed; to preserve a "foolish people from idolatry, and false worship; to rescue "the law from corrupt glosses, and superstitious abuses; and "to put men in mind of (what they are so willing to forget) "that eternal and invariable rule, which was before these *posi-*"*tive* duties, would continue after them, and was to be observed, "even then, in preference to them.

"The discharge, I say, of this part of the prophetic office "taking up so much room in the book of *Psalms*; this hath "been one reason, among many others, why they have always "been so highly esteemed; because we are from hence furnish-"ed with a proper reply to an argument commonly made use "of by unbelievers, who look upon all revealed religions as "pious frauds and impostures, on the account of the preju-"dices they have entertained in relation to that of the *Jews*; "the whole of which they first suppose to lie in external per-"formances, and then easily persuade themselves, that God "could never be the author of such a mere piece of pageantry "and empty formality, nor delight in a worship which consisted "purely in a number of odd unaccountable ceremonies. "Which objection of theirs, we should not be able thoroughly "to answer, unless we could prove (chiefly out of the *Psalms*, "and other parts of the prophetic writings) that the Jewish "religion was somewhat more than bare outside and shew; "and that inward purity, and the devotion of the heart, was "a duty then, as well as now."

This appears to me an excellent introduction. The thought on which it rests is solid and judicious; that in the book of Psalms, the attention of men is called to the moral and spiritual part of religion; and the Jewish dispensation thereby vindicated from the suspicion of requiring nothing more from its votaries, than the observance of the external rites and ceremo-

nies

nies of the law. Such views of religion are proper to be often displayed; and deserve to be insisted on, by all who wish to render preaching conducive to the great purpose of promoting righteousness and virtue. The style, as far as we have gone, is not only free from faults, but elegant and happy.

It is a great beauty in an introduction, when it can be made to turn on some one thought, fully brought out and illustrated; especially, if that thought has a close connexion with the following discourse, and, at the same time, does not anticipate any thing that is afterwards to be introduced in a more proper place. This Introduction of Atterbury's has all these advantages. The encomium which he makes on the strain of David's Psalms, is not such as might as well have been prefixed to any other discourse, the text of which was taken from any of the Psalms. Had this been the case, the introduction would have lost much of its beauty. We shall see from what follows, how naturally the introductory thought connects with his text, and how happily it ushers it in.

"One great instance of this proof, we have in the words "now before us; which are taken from a Psalm of *Asaph*, "written on purpose to set out the weakness and worthlessness "of external performances, when compared with more sub-"stantial and vital duties. To enforce which doctrine, God "himself is brought in as delivering it. *Hear, O my people, and* "*I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God,* "*even thy God.* The Preface is very solemn, and therefore "what it ushers in, we may be sure is of no common import-"ance; *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offer-*"*ings, to have been continually before me.* That is, I will not so "reprove thee for any failures in thy sacrifices and burnt-of-"ferings, as if these were the only, or the chief things I requir-"ed of thee. *I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goat* "*out of thy folds;* I prescribed not sacrifices to thee for my own "sake, because I needed them; *For every beast of the forest is* "*mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.* Mine they are, and "were, before I commanded thee to offer them to me; so that, "as it follows, *If I were hungry, yet would I not tell thee; for* "*the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.* But can ye be so "gross and senseless, as to think me liable to hunger and thirst?

"as

" as to imagine that wants of that kind can touch me? *Will I*
" *eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* Thus doth he
" expostulate severely with them, after the most graceful man-
" ner of the eastern poetry. The issue of which is a plain and
" full resolution of the case, in those few words of the text:
" *Offer unto God thanksgiving.* Would you do your homage the
" most agreeable way? would you render the most acceptable
" of services? *Offer unto God thanksgiving.*"

It is often a difficult matter to illustrate gracefully the text of a sermon from the context, and to point out the connexion between them. This is a part of the discourse which is apt to become dry and tedious, especially when pursued into a minute commentary. And, therefore, except as far as such illustration from the context is necessary for explaining the meaning, or in cases where it serves to give dignity and force to the text, I would advise it to be always treated with brevity. Sometimes it may even be wholly omitted, and the text assumed merely as an independent proposition, if the connexion with the context be obscure, and would require a laborious explanation. In the present case, the illustration from the context is singularly happy. The passage of the Psalm on which it is founded is noble and spirited, and connected in such a manner with the text, as to introduce it with a very striking emphasis. On the language I have little to observe, except that the phrase, *one great instance of this proof*, is a clumsy expression. It was sufficient to have said, *one great proof*, or *one great instance of this*. In the same sentence, when he speaks of *setting out the weakness and worthlessness of external performances*, we may observe, that the word *worthlessness*, as it is now commonly used, signifies more than the deficiency of worth, which is all that the Author means. It generally imports, a considerable degree of badness or blame. It would be more proper, therefore, to say, the *imperfection*, or the *insignificancy*, of external performances.

" The use I intend to make of these words, is, from hence
" to raise some thoughts about that very excellent and import-
" ant duty of Praise and Thanksgiving, a subject not unfit to
" be discoursed of at this time; whether we consider, either
" the more than ordinary coldness that appears of late in men's

" tempers

"tempers towards the practice of this (or any other) part of "a warm and affecting devotion; the great occasion of setting "aside this particular day in the calendar, some years ago; "or the new instances of mercy and goodness, which God "hath lately been pleased to bestow upon us; answering at "last the many *prayers* and *fastings*, by which we have be-"sought him so long for the establishment of their majesties' "throne, and for the success of their arms; and giving us in "his good time, an opportunity of appearing before him in the "more delightful part of our duty, *with the voice of joy and* "*praise, with a multitude that kept holidays.*"

In this paragraph there is nothing remarkable; no particular beauty or neatness of expression; and the sentence which it forms is long and tiresome—*to raise some thoughts about that very excellent*, &c. is rather loose and awkward; better, *to recommend that very excellent*, &c. and when he mentions *setting aside* a particular day in the calendar, one would imagine, that *setting apart* would have been more proper, as to *set aside*, seems rather to suggest a different idea.

"*Offer unto God Thanksgiving.* Which that we may do, "let us inquire first, how we are to *understand* this command "of offering Praise and Thanksgiving unto God; and then, "how *reasonable* it is that we should comply with it."

This is the general division of the discourse. An excellent one it is, and corresponds to many subjects of this kind, where particular duties are to be treated of; first to explain, and then to recommend or enforce them. A division should always be simple and natural; and much depends on the proper view which it gives of the subject.

"Our inquiry into what is meant here, will be very short, "for who is there, that understands any thing of religion, but "knows, that the offering praise and thanks to God, implies, "our having a lively and devout sense of his excellencies, and "of his benefits; our recollecting them with humility and "thankfulness of heart; and our expressing these inward af-"fections by suitable outward signs, by reverent and lowly "postures of body, by songs and hymns, and spiritual ejacula-"tions; either publickly or privately; either in the customary "and daily service of the church, or in its more solemn assem-

"blies,

"blies, convened upon extraordinary occasions? This is the "account which every christian easily gives himself of it; and "which, therefore, it would be needless to enlarge upon. I "shall only take notice upon this head, that Praise and Thanks-"giving do, in strictness of speech, signify things somewhat "different. Our *praise* properly terminates in God, on account "of his natural excellencies and perfections; and is that act "of devotion, by which we confess and admire his several at-"tributes: but *thanksgiving* is a narrower duty, and imports "only a grateful sense and acknowledgment of past mercies. "We praise God for all his glorious acts of every kind, that "regard either us or other men, for his very *vengeance*, and "those *judgments* which he sometimes sends *abroad in the earth*; "but we thank him, properly speaking, for the instances of his "*goodness* alone; and for such only of these, as we ourselves "are some way concerned in. This, I say, is what the two "words strictly imply; but since the language of Scripture is "generally less exact, and useth either of them often to express "the other by, I shall not think myself obliged, in what fol-"lows, thus nicely always to distinguish them."

There was room here for insisting more fully on the nature of the duty, than the Author has done under this head; in particular, this was the place for correcting the mistake, to which men are always prone, of making Thanksgiving to consist merely in outward expressions; and for shewing them, that the essence of the duty lies in the inward feelings of the heart. In general, it is of much use to give full and distinct explications of religious duties. But as our Author intended only one discourse on the subject, he could not enlarge with equal fulness on every part of it; and he has chosen to dwell on that part, on which indeed it is most necessary to enlarge, the motives enforcing the duty. For, as it is an easier matter to know, than to practise duty, the persuasive part of the discourse is that to which the speaker should always bend his chief strength. The account given in this head, of the nature of Praise and Thanksgiving, though short, is yet comprehensive and distinct, and the language is smooth and elegant.

"Now the great *reasonableness* of this duty of Praise or "Thanksgiving, and our several *obligations* to it, will appear, if

"we

"we either consider it *absolutely* in itself, as the debt of our "natures; or *compare* it with other duties, and shew the rank "it bears among them; or set out, in the last place, some of "its peculiar properties and *advantages*, with regard to the de-"vout performer of it."

The Author here enters upon the main part of his subject, the reasonableness of the duty, and mentions three arguments for proving it. These are well stated, and are in themselves proper and weighty considerations. How far he has handled each of them to advantage, will appear as we proceed. I cannot, however, but think that he has omitted one very material part of the argument, which was to have shewn the obligations we are under to this duty, from the various subjects of Thanksgiving afforded us by the divine goodness. This would have led him to review the chief benefits of creation, providence, and redemption: and certainly, they are these which lay the foundation of the whole argument for Thanksgiving. The heart must first be affected with a suitable sense of the divine benefits, before one can be excited to praise God. If you would persuade me to be thankful to a benefactor, you must not employ such considerations merely as those upon which the Author here rests, taken from gratitude's being the law of my nature, or bearing a high rank among moral duties, or being attended with peculiar advantages. These are considerations but of a secondary nature. You must begin with setting before me all that my friend has done for me, if you mean to touch my heart, and to call forth the emotions of gratitude. The case is perfectly similar, when we are exhorted to give thanks to God; and, therefore, in giving a full view of the subject, the blessings conferred on us by divine goodness should have been taken into the argument.

It may be said, however, in apology for our Author, that this would have led him into too wide a field for one discourse, and into a field also, which is difficult, because so beaten, the enumeration of the divine benefits. He therefore seems to take it for granted, that we have upon our minds a just sense of these benefits. He assumes them as known and acknowledged; and setting aside what may be called the pathetic part of the subject, or what was calculated to warm the heart, he goes on

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to the reaſoning part. In this management, I cannot altogether blame him. I do not by any means ſay, that it is neceſſary in every diſcourſe to take in all that belongs to the doctrine of which we treat. Many a diſcourſe is ſpoiled, by attempting to render it too copious and comprehenſive. The preacher may, without reprehenſion, take up any part of a great ſubject to which his genius at the time leads him, and make that his theme. But when he omits any thing which may be thought eſſential, he ought to give notice, that this is a part, which for the time he lays aſide. Something of this ſort, would perhaps have been proper here. Our author might have begun, by ſaying, that the reaſonableneſs of this duty muſt appear to every thinking being, who reflects upon the infinite obligations which are laid upon us, by creating, preſerving, and redeeming love; and, after taking notice that the field which theſe open, was too wide for him to enter upon at that time, have proceeded to his other heads. Let us now conſider theſe ſeparately.

" The duty of Praiſe and Thankſgiving, conſidered *abſolutely* " in itſelf, is, I ſay, the debt and law of our nature. We had " ſuch faculties beſtowed on us by our Creator, as made us " capable of ſatisfying this debt, and obeying this law; and " they never, therefore, work more naturally and freely, than " when they are thus employed.

" 'Tis one of the earlieſt inſtructions given us by philoſophy, " and which hath ever ſince been approved and inculcated by " the wiſeſt men of all ages, that the original deſign of making " man was, that he might praiſe and honour him who made " him. When God had finiſhed this goodly frame of things " we call *the world*, and put together the ſeveral parts of it, " according to his infinite wiſdom, in exact number, weight, " and meaſure; there was ſtill wanting a creature, in theſe " lower regions, that could apprehend the beauty, order, and " exquiſite contrivance of it; that from contemplating the " gift, might be able to raiſe itſelf to the great Giver, and do " honour to all his attributes. Every thing indeed that God " made, did, in ſome ſenſe, glorify its Author, inaſmuch as it " carried upon it the plain mark and impreſs of the Deity, " and was an effect worthy of that firſt cauſe from whence it

" flowed;

" flowed; and thus might the *heavens* be said, at the first mo-
" ment in which they stood forth, *to declare his glory, and the*
" *firmament to show his handy-work*: But this was an imperfect
" and defective glory; the sign was of no signification here
" below, whilst there was no one here as yet to take notice of
" it. Man, therefore, was formed to supply this want, endow-
" ed with powers fit to find out, and to acknowledge these un-
" limited perfections; and then put into this temple of God,
" this lower world, as the priest of nature, to offer up the in-
" cense of thanks and praise for the mute and insensible part
" of the creation.

" This, I say, hath been the opinion all along of the most
" thoughtful men down from the most ancient times: and
" though it be not demonstrative, yet it is what we cannot but
" judge highly reasonable, if we do but allow, that man was
" made for some end or other; and that he is capable of per-
" ceiving that end. For, then, let us search and inquire never
" so much, we shall find no other account of him that we can
" rest upon so well. If we say, that he was made purely for
" the good pleasure of God; this is, in effect, to say, that he
" was made for no determinate end; or for none, at least,
" that we can discern. If we say, that he was designed as an
" instance of the wisdom, and power, and goodness of God;
" this, indeed, may be the reason of his *being* in general; for
" 'tis the common reason of the being of every thing besides.
" But it gives no account, why he was made *such* a being as he
" is, a reflecting, thoughtful, inquisitive being. The particular
" reason of this, seems most aptly to be drawn from the praise
" and honour that was (not only to redound to God from him,
" but) to be given to God by him."

The thought which runs through all this passage, of man's being the priest of nature, and of his existence being calculated chiefly for this end, that he might offer up the praises of the mute part of the creation, is an ingenious thought, and well illustrated. It was a favourite idea among some of the ancient philosophers; and it is not the worse on that account, as it thereby appears to have been a natural sentiment of the human mind. In composing a sermon, however, it might have been better to have introduced it as a sort of collateral argument, or an incidental illustra-

tion, than to have displayed it with so much pomp, and to have placed it in the front of the arguments for this duty. It does not seem to me, when placed in this station, to bear all the stress which the author lays upon it. When the divine goodness brought man into existence, we cannot well conceive that its chief purpose was, to form a being who might sing praises to his Maker. Prompted by infinite benevolence, the Supreme Creator formed the human race, that they might rise to a happiness, and to the enjoyment of himself, through a course of virtue, or proper action. The sentiment on which our author dwells, however beautiful, appears too loose and rhetorical, to be a principal head of discourse.

"This duty, therefore, is the debt and law of our nature. "And it will more distinctly appear to be such, if we consid- "er the two ruling faculties of our mind, the *understanding* "and the *will* apart, in both which it is deeply founded: in "the understanding, as in the principle of reason, which owns "and acknowledges it; in the will, as in the fountain of "gratitude and return, which prompts, and even constrains "us to pay it.

"*Reason* was given us as a rule and measure, by the help "of which we were to proportion our esteem of every thing, "according to the degrees of perfection and goodness which "we found therein. I cannot, therefore, if it doth its office "at all, but apprehend God as the best and most perfect be- "ing; it must needs see, and own, and admire his infinite "perfections. And this is what is strictly meant by *praise*; "which, therefore, is expressed in Scripture, by *confessing* to "God, and *acknowledging* him; by *ascribing* to him what is "his due; and as far as this sense of the words reaches, 'tis "impossible to *think* of God without praising him; for it "depends not on the understanding, how it shall apprehend "things, any more than it doth on the eye, how visible ob- "jects shall appear to it.

"The duty takes the further and surer hold of us, by the "means of the will, and that strong bent towards gratitude, "which the Author of our nature hath implanted in it. "There is not a more active principle than this in the mind "of man; and surely that which deserves its utmost force, "and

" and ſhould ſet all its ſprings a-work, is God; the great and
" univerſal Benefactor, from whom alone we received what-
" ever we either have, or are, and to whom we can poſſibly
" repay nothing but our praiſes, or (to ſpeak more properly
" on this head, and according to the ſtrict import of the
" word) our thankſgiving. *Who hath firſt given to God,* (ſaith
" the great Apoſtle, in his uſual figure) *and it ſhall be recom-*
" *penſed to him again?* A gift, it ſeems, always requires a rec-
" ompenſe: nay, *but of him, and through him, and to him, are*
" *all things: of him,* as the Author; *through him,* as the
" Preſerver and Governor; *to him,* as the end and perfection
" of all things: *to whom, therefore,* (as it follows) be glory for
" ever, Amen!"

I cannot much approve of the light in which our author places his argument in theſe paragraphs. There is ſomething too metaphyſical and refined, in his deducing, in this manner, the obligation to thankſgiving, from the two faculties of the mind, underſtanding and will. Though what he ſays be in itſelf juſt, yet the argument is not ſufficiently plain and ſtriking. Arguments in ſermons, eſpecially on ſubjects that ſo naturally and eaſily ſuggeſt them, ſhould be palpable and popular; ſhould not be brought from topics, that appear far ſought, but ſhould directly addreſs the heart and feelings. The preacher ought never to depart too far from the common ways of thinking, and expreſſing himſelf. I am inclined to think, that this whole head might have been improved, if the author had taken up more obvious ground; had ſtated gratitude as one of the moſt natural principles in the human heart; had illuſtrated this, by ſhowing how odious the oppoſite diſpoſition is, and with what general conſent men, in all ages, have agreed in hating and condemning the ungrateful: and then applying theſe reaſonings to the preſent caſe, had placed, in a ſtrong view, that entire corruption of a moral ſentiment which it diſcovers, to be deſtitute of thankful emotions towards the Supreme Benefactor of mankind. As the moſt natural method of giving vent to grateful ſentiments is, by external expreſſions of thankſgiving, he might then have anſwered the objection that is apt to occur, of the expreſſion of our praiſe being inſignificant to the Almighty. But, by ſeeking to be too refined in his argument, he has omitted ſome of the moſt ſtriking and obvious

considerations, and which, properly displayed, would have afforded as great a field for Eloquence, as the topics which he has chosen. He goes on.

"Gratitude consists in an equal return of benefits, if we are "able; of thanks, if we are not: which thanks, therefore, "must rise always in proportion as the favours received are "great, and the receiver incapable of making any other sort "of requital. Now, since no man hath benefited God at any "time, and yet every man, in each moment of his life, is "continually benefited by him, what strong obligations must "we needs be under to thank him? 'Tis true, our thanks "are really as insignificant to him, as any other kind of re-"turn would be; in themselves, indeed, they are worthless; "but his goodness hath put a value upon them: he hath "declared, he will accept them in lieu of the vast debt we "owe; and after that, which is fittest for us, to dispute "how they came to be taken as an *equivalent*, or to pay "them?

"It is, therefore, the voice of nature (as far as gratitude "itself is so) that the good things we receive from above, "should be sent back again thither in thanks and praises; *as* "*the rivers run into the sea, to the place* (the ocean of beneficence) "*from whence the rivers come, thither* should *they return again.*"

In these paragraphs, he has, indeed, touched some of the considerations which I mentioned. But he has only touched them; whereas, with advantage, they might have formed the main body of his argument.

"We have considered the duty *absolutely*; we are now to "*compare* it with others, and to see what rank it bears among "them. And here we shall find, that, among all the acts of "religion immediately addressed to God, this is much the no-"blest and most excellent; as it must needs be, if what hath "been laid down be allowed, that the end of man's creation "was to praise and glorify God. For that cannot but be the "most noble and excellent act of any being, which best an-"swers the end and design of it. Other parts of devotion, "such as *confession* and *prayer*, seem not originally to have been "designed for man, nor man for them. They imply *guilt* and "*want*, with which the *state of innocence* was not acquaint-"ed.

"ed. Had man continued in that ſtate, his worſhip (like the "devotions of angels) had been paid to Heaven in pure acts "of thankſgiving; and nothing had been left for him to do, "beyond the enjoying the good things of life, as nature direct-"ed, and praiſing the God of nature who beſtowed them. "But being fallen from innocence and abundance; having "contracted guilt, and forfeited his right to all ſorts of mer-"cies; prayer and confeſſion became neceſſary, for a time, to "retrieve the loſs, and to reſtore him to that ſtate wherein he "ſhould be able to live without them. Theſe are fitted, there-"fore, for a lower diſpenſation; before which, in Paradiſe, "there was nothing but praiſe, and after which, there ſhall "be nothing but that in heaven. Our perfect ſtate did at "firſt, and will at laſt, conſiſt in the performance of this duty; "and herein, therefore, lies the excellence, and the honour of "our nature.

"'Tis the ſame way of reaſoning, by which the apoſtle hath "given the preference to charity, beyond faith, and hope, and "every ſpiritual gift. *Charity never faileth*, ſaith he; meaning, "that it is not a virtue uſeful only in this life, but will accom-"pany us alſo into the next: *but whether there be prophecies*, "*they ſhall fail; whether there be tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; wheth-"er there be knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away.* Theſe are gifts "of a temporary advantage, and ſhall all periſh in the uſing. "*For we know in part, and we propheſy in part*: our preſent "ſtate is imperfect, and, therefore, what belongs to that, and "only that, muſt be imperfect too. *But when that which is "perfect is come, then that which is in part ſhall be done away.* "The argument of St. Paul, we ſee, which ſets charity above "the reſt of chriſtian graces, will give praiſe alſo the pre-emi-"nence over all the parts of chriſtian worſhip; and we may "conclude our reaſoning, therefore, as he doth his: *And now "abideth confeſſion, prayer, and praiſe, theſe three; but the greateſt "of theſe is praiſe.*"

The author, here, enters on the ſecond part of his argument, the high rank which thankſgiving holds, when compared with other duties of religion. This he handles, with much Eloquence and beauty. His idea, that this was the original worſhip of man, before his fall rendered other duties requiſite, and ſhall continue to be his worſhip in heaven, when the duties

which

which are occasioned by a consciousness of guilt shall have no place, is solid and just; his illustration of it is very happy; and the style extremely flowing and sweet. Seldom do we meet with any piece of composition in sermons, that has more merit than this head.

"It is so, certainly, on other accounts, as well as this; "particularly, as it is the most *disinterested* branch of our religious service; such as hath the most of God, and the least "of ourselves in it, of any we pay; and therefore approaches "the nearest way of any to a pure, and free, and perfect act "of homage. For though a good action doth not grow immediately worthless by being done with the prospect of advantage, as some have strangely imagined; yet it will be allowed, "I suppose, that its being done, without the mixture of that "end, or with as little of it as possible, recommends it so much "the more, and raises the price of it. *Doth* Job *fear God for* "*nought?* was an objection of Satan; which implied, that "those duties were most valuable, where our own interest was "least aimed at: and God seems, by the commission he then "gave Satan, to try experiments upon *Job*, thus far to have "allowed his plea. Now, our requests for future, and even "our acknowledgments of past mercies, centre purely in ourselves; our own interest is the direct aim of them. But "praise is a generous and unmercenary principle, which proposes no other end to itself, but to do, as is fit for a creature "endowed with such faculties to do, towards the most perfect "and beneficent of beings; and to pay the willing tribute of "honour there, where the voice of reason directs us to pay it. "God hath, indeed, annexed a blessing to the duty; and when "we know this, we cannot chuse, while we are performing "the duty, but have some regard to the blessing which belongs "to it. However, this is not the direct aim of our devotions, "nor was it the first motive that stirred us up to them. Had "it been so, we should naturally have betaken ourselves to "prayer, and breathed out our desires in that form wherein "they are most properly conveyed.

"In short, praise is our most excellent work, a work common "to the church triumphant and militant, and which lifts us "up into communion and fellowship with angels. The mat-

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"ter about which it is conversant, is always the perfections of "God's nature; and the act itself, is the perfection of ours."

Our Author's second illustration, is taken from praise being the most disinterested act of homage. This he explains justly and elegantly; though, perhaps, the consideration is rather too thin and refined for enforcing religious duties: as creatures, such as we, in approaching to the divine Presence, can never be supposed to lay aside all consideration of our own wants and necessities; and certainly are not required (as the Author admits) to divest ourselves of such regards. The concluding sentence of this head is elegant and happily expressed.

"I come now, in the last place, to set out some of its peculiar *properties and advantages*, which recommend it to the "devout performer. And,

"1. It is the most *pleasing* part of our devotions: it pro"ceeds always from a lively cheerful temper of mind, and it "cherishes and improves what it proceeds from. *For it is good* "*to sing praises unto our God*, (says one, whose experience, in this "case, we may rely upon) *for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.* "Petition and confession are the language of the indigent and "the guilty, the breathings of a sad and contrite spirit: *Is any* "*afflicted? let him pray*; but, *is any merry? let him sing psalms.* "The most usual and natural way of men's expressing the "mirth of their hearts is in a song, and songs are the very lan"guage of praise; to the expression of which they are in a "peculiar manner appropriated, and are scarce of any other "use in religion. Indeed, the whole composition of this duty "is such, as throughout speaks ease and delight to the mind. "It proceeds from *love* and from *thankfulness*; from *love*, the "fountain of pleasure, the passion which gives every thing we "do, or enjoy, its relish and agreeableness. From *thankfulness*, "which involves in it the memory of past benefits, the actual "presence of them to the mind, and the repeated enjoyment "of them. And as is its principle, such is its end also: for it "procureth quiet and ease to the mind, by doing somewhat "towards satisfying that debt which it labours under; by de"livering it of those thoughts of praise and gratitude, those "exultations it is so full of; and which would grow uneasy "and troublesome to it, if they were kept in. If the thankful

" *refrained*,

" *refrained, it would be pain and grief* to them : but then, then " *is their soul satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when their* " *mouth praiseth God with joyful lips.*"

In beginning this head of discourse, the expression which the Author uses, to *set out some of its peculiar properties and advantages*, would now be reckoned not so proper an expression, as *to point out*, or *to show*. The first subdivision concerning praise being the most pleasant part of devotion, is very just and well expressed, as far as it goes; but seems to me rather defective. Much more might have been said, upon the pleasure that accompanies such exalted acts of devotion. It was a cold thought, to dwell upon its disburdening the mind of a debt. The Author should have insisted more upon the influence of praise and thanksgiving, in warming, gladdening, soothing the mind; lifting it above the world, to dwell among divine and eternal objects. He should have described the peace and joy which then expand the heart; the relief which this exercise procures from the cares and agitations of life; the encouraging views of providence to which it leads our attention; and the trust which it promotes in the divine mercy for the future, by the commemoration of benefits past. In short, this was the place for his pouring out a greater flow of devotional sentiments than what we here find.

" 2. It is another distinguishing property of divine praise, " that it enlargeth the powers and capacities of our souls, turn" ing them from low and little things, upon their greatest and " noblest object, the divine nature, and employing them in the " discovery and admiration of those several perfections that " adorn it. We see what difference there is between man and " man, such as there is hardly greater between man and beast; " and this proceeds chiefly from the different sphere of thought " which they act in, and the different objects they converse " with. The mind is essentially the same, in the peasant and " the prince; the force of it naturally equal, in the untaught " man, and the philosopher; only the one of these is busied " in mean affairs, and within narrower bounds; the other ex" ercises himself in things of weight and moment; and this it " is, that puts the wide distance between them. Noble objects " are to the mind, what the sun-beams are to a bud or flower;

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"they open and unfold, as it were, the leaves of it; put it "upon exerting and spreading itself every way; and call forth "all those powers that lie hid and locked up in it. The praise "and admiration of God, therefore, brings this advantage a-"long with it, that it sets our faculties upon their full stretch, "and improves them to all the degrees of perfection of which "they are capable."

This head is just, well expressed, and to censure it, might appear hypercritical. Some of the expressions, however, one would think, might be amended. The simile, for instance, about the effects of the sun-beams upon the bud or flower, is pretty, but not correctly expressed. *They open and unfold, as it were, the leaves of it.* If this is to be literally applied to the flower, the phrase, *as it were*, is needless; if it is to be metaphorically understood, (which appears to be the case) the *leaves of the mind*, is harsh language; besides that, *put it upon exerting itself*, is rather a low expression. Nothing is more nice than to manage properly such similes and allusions, so as to preserve them perfectly correct, and at the same time to render the image lively: it might perhaps be amended in some such way as this: "As the sun-beams open the bud, and unfold the leaves of a flower, noble objects have a like effect upon the mind: they expand and spread it, and call forth those powers that before lay hid and locked up in the soul."

"3. It farther promotes in us an exquisite sense of God's "honour, and an high indignation of mind at every thing that "openly profanes it. For what we value and delight in, we "cannot with patience hear slighted or abused. Our own "praises, which we are constantly putting up, will be a *spur* to "us towards procuring and promoting the divine glory in every "other instance; and will make us set our faces against all "open and avowed impieties; which, methinks, should be "considered a little by such as would be thought not to be "wanting in this duty, and yet are often silent under the foulest "dishonours done to religion, and its great Author; for tame-"ly to hear God's name and worship vilified by others, is no "very good argument that we have been used to honour and "reverence him, in good earnest, ourselves."

The thought here is well founded, though it is carelessly and loosely brought out. The sentence, *our own praises which we are constantly putting up, will be a spur to us towards procuring and promoting the divine glory in every other instance*, is both negligent in language, and ambiguous in meaning; for *our own praises*, properly signifies the praises of ourselves. Much better if he had said, "Those devout praises which we constant-"ly offer up to the Almighty, will naturally prompt us to "promote the divine glory in every other instance."

"4. It will, beyond all this, work in us a deep humility "and consciousness of our own imperfections. Upon a fre-"quent attention to God and his attributes, we shall easily "discover our own weakness and emptiness; our swelling "thoughts of ourselves will abate, and we shall see and feel "that we are *altogether lighter to be laid in the balance than vani-*"*ty*; and this is a lesson which, to the greatest part of man-"kind is, I think, very well worth learning. We are natural-"ly presumptuous and vain; full of ourselves, and regardless "of every thing besides, especially when some little outward "privileges distinguish us from the rest of mankind; then, "'tis odds, but we look into ourselves with great degrees of "complacency, *and are wiser* (and better every way) *in our own* "*conceit, than seven men that can render a reason.* Now nothing "will contribute so much to the cure of this vanity, as a due "attention to God's excellencies and perfections. By compar-"ing these with those which we imagine belong to us, we "shall learn, *not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought* "*to think of ourselves*, but *to think soberly*; we shall find more "satisfaction in looking upwards, and humbling ourselves be-"fore our common Creator, than in casting our eyes down-"ward with scorn upon our fellow creatures, and setting at "nought any part of the work of his hands. The vast dis-"tance we are at from real and infinite worth, will astonish "us so much, that we shall not be tempted to value ourselves "upon these lesser degrees of pre-eminence, which custom, or "opinion, or some little accidental advantages, have given us "over other men."

Though the thought here also be just, yet a like deficiency in elegance and beauty appears. The phrase *'tis odds, but we*

look

look into ourselves with great degrees of complacency, is much too low and colloquial for a sermon—he might have said, *we are likely*, or *we are prone* to look into ourselves.—*Comparing these with those which we imagine to belong to us*, is also very careless style.—*By comparing these with the virtues and abilities which we ascribe to ourselves, we shall learn*—would have been purer and more correct.

"5. I shall mention but one use of it more, and 'tis this; that "a conscientious praise of God will keep us back from all false "and mean praise, all fulsome and servile flatteries, such as "are in use among men. Praising, as 'tis commonly manag- "ed, is nothing else but a trial of skill upon a man, how "many good things we can possibly say of him. All the "treasures of oratory are ransacked, and all the fine things "that ever were said, are heaped together for his sake; and "no matter whether it belongs to him or not; so there be "enough on't. Which is one deplorable instance, among a "thousand, of the baseness of human nature, of its small "regard to truth and justice; to right or wrong; to what "is, or is not to be praised. But he who hath a deep sense of "the excellencies of God upon his heart, will make a God "of nothing besides. He will give every one his just enco- "mium, honour where honour is due, and as much as is due, "because it is his duty to do so; but the honour of God "will suffer him to go no further. Which rule, if it had "been observed, a neighbouring prince (who now, God be "thanked, needs flattery a great deal more than ever he did) "would have wanted a great deal of that incense which hath "been offered up to him by his adorers."

This head appears scarcely to deserve any place among the more important topics, that naturally presented themselves on this subject; at least, it had much better have wanted the application which the author makes of his reasoning to the flatterers of Louis XIV; and the thanks which he offers to God, for the affairs of that prince being in so low a state, that he now needed flattery more than ever. This political satire is altogether out of place, and unworthy of the subject.

One would be inclined to think, upon reviewing our author's arguments, that he has overlooked some topics, respect-

ing the happy consequences of this duty, of fully as much importance as any that he has inserted. Particularly, he ought not to have omitted the happy tendency of praise and thanksgiving, to strengthen good dispositions in the heart; to promote love to God, and imitation of those perfections which we adore; and to infuse a spirit of ardour and zeal into the whole of religion, as the service of our Benefactor. These are consequences which naturally follow from the proper performance of this duty; and which ought not to have been omitted; as no opportunity should be lost, of showing the good effect of devotion on practical religion and moral virtue; and pointing out the necessary connexion of the one with the other. For certainly the great end of preaching is, to make men better in all the relations of life, and to promote that complete reformation of heart and conduct, in which true christianity consists. Our author, however, upon the whole, is not deficient in such views of religion; for, in his general strain of preaching, as he is extremely pious, so he is, at the same time, practical and moral.

His summing up the whole argument, in the next paragraph, is elegant and beautiful; and such concluding views of the subject are frequently very proper and useful: "Upon these "grounds doth the duty of praise stand, and these are the "obligations that bind us to the performance of it. 'Tis the "end of our being, and the very rule and law of our nature; "flowing from the two great fountains of human action, the "understanding and the will, naturally, and almost necessarily. "It is the most excellent part of our religious worship; en-"during to eternity, after the rest shall be *done away*; and "paid, even now, in the frankest manner, with the least re-"gard to our own interest. It recommends itself to us by "several peculiar properties and advantages; as it carries more "pleasure in it, than all other kinds of devotion; as it enlarges "and exalts the several powers of the mind; as it breeds in "us an exquisite sense of God's honour, and a willingness to "promote it in the world; as it teaches us to be humble and "lowly ourselves, and yet preserves us from base and sordid flat-"tery, from bestowing mean and undue praises upon others."

After this, our Author addresses himself to two classes of men, the careless and the profane. His address to the careless is beautiful and pathetic; that to the profane, is not so well executed, and is liable to some objection. Such addresses appear to me to be, on several occasions, very useful parts of a discourse. They prevailed much in the strain of preaching before the restoration; and, perhaps, since that period, have been too much neglected. They afford an opportunity of bringing home to the consciences of the audience, many things, which, in the course of the sermon, were perhaps, delivered in the abstract.

I shall not dwell on the conclusion of the sermon, which is chiefly employed in observations on the posture of public affairs at that time. Considered upon the whole, this discourse of Bishop Atterbury's is both useful and beautiful, though I have ventured to point out some defects in it. Seldom, or never, can we expect to meet with a composition of any kind, which is absolutely perfect in all its parts: and when we take into account the difficulties which I before showed to attend the eloquence of the pulpit, we have, perhaps, less reason to look for perfection in a sermon, than in any other composition.

LECTURE XXXI.

CONDUCT OF A DISCOURSE IN ALL ITS PARTS. INTRODUCTION, DIVISION, NARRATION AND EXPLICATION.

I HAVE, in the four preceding Lectures, considered what is peculiar to each of the three great fields of public speaking, popular assemblies, the bar, and the pulpit. I am now to treat of what is common to them all; of the conduct of a discourse or oration, in general. The previous view which I have given of the distinguishing spirit and character of different kinds of public speaking, was necessary for the proper application of the rules which I am about to deliver; and as I proceed, I shall farther point out, how far any of these rules may have a particular respect to the bar, to the pulpit, or to popular courts.

On whatever subject any one intends to discourse, he will most commonly begin with some introduction, in order to prepare the minds of his hearers; he will then state his subject, and explain the facts connected with it; he will employ arguments for establishing his own opinion, and overthrowing that of his antagonist; he may, perhaps, if there be room for it, endeavour to touch the passions of his audience; and after having said all he thinks proper, he will bring his discourse to a close, by some peroration or conclusion. This being the natural train of speaking, the parts that compose a regular formal oration, are these six; first, the exordium or introduction; secondly, the state, and the division of the subject; thirdly, narration, or explication; fourthly, the reasoning or arguments; fifthly, the pathetic part; and lastly, the conclusion. I do not mean that each of these must enter into every public discourse, or that they must enter always in this order. There is no reason for being so formal on every occasion; nay, it would

would often be a fault, and would render a discourse pedantic and stiff. There may be many excellent discourses in public, where several of these parts are altogether wanting; where the speaker, for instance, uses no introduction, but enters directly on his subject; where he has no occasion either to divide or explain; but simply reasons on one side of the question, and then finishes. But as the parts, which I mentioned, are the natural constituent parts of a regular oration; and as in every discourse whatever, some of them must be found, it is necessary to our present purpose, that I should treat of each of them distinctly.

I begin, of course, with the exordium or introduction. This is manifestly common to all the three kinds of public speaking. It is not a rhetorical invention. It is founded upon nature, and suggested by common sense. When one is going to counsel another; when he takes upon him to instruct, or to reprove, prudence will generally direct him not to do it abruptly, but to use some preparation; to begin with somewhat that may incline the persons, to whom he addresses himself, to judge favourably of what he is about to say; and may dispose them to such a train of thought, as will forward and assist the purpose which he has in view. This is, or ought to be, the main scope of an introduction. Accordingly Cicero and Quintilian mention three ends, to one or other of which it should be subservient, "Reddere auditores benevolos, attentos, dociles."

First, to conciliate the good will of the hearers; to render them benevolent, or well-affected to the speaker and to the subject. Topics for this purpose may, in causes at the bar, be sometimes taken from the particular situation of the speaker himself, or of his client, or from the character or behaviour of his antagonists contrasted with his own; on other occasions, from the nature of the subject, as closely connected with the interest of the hearers: and, in general, from the modesty and good intention, with which the speaker enters upon his subject. The second end of an introduction, is, to raise the attention of the hearers; which may be affected, by giving them some hints of the importance, dignity, or novelty of the subject; or some favourable view of the clearness and precision with which we are to treat it; and of the brevity with which we are to discourse. The third end, is to render the hearers docile, or open

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to perſuaſion; for which end, we muſt begin with ſtudying to remove any particular prepoſſeſſions they may have contracted againſt the cauſe, or ſide of the argument which we eſpouſe.

Some one of theſe ends ſhould be propoſed by every introduction. When there is no occaſion for aiming at any of them; when we are already ſecure of the good will, the attention, and the docility of the audience, as may often be the caſe, formal introductions can, without any prejudice, be omitted. And, indeed, when they ſerve for no purpoſe but mere oſtentation, they had, for the moſt part, better be omitted; unleſs as far as reſpect to the audience makes it decent, that a ſpeaker ſhould not break in upon them too abruptly, but by a ſhort exordium prepare them for what he is going to ſay. Demoſthenes's introductions are always ſhort and ſimple; Cicero's are fuller and more artful.

The ancient critics diſtinguiſh two kinds of introductions, which they call "Principium," and "Inſinuatio." "Principium" is, where the orator plainly and directly profeſſes his aim in ſpeaking. "Inſinuatio" is, where a larger compaſs muſt be taken; and where, preſuming the diſpoſition of the audience to be much againſt the orator, he muſt gradually reconcile them to hearing him, before he plainly diſcovers the point which he has in view.

Of this latter ſort of introduction, we have an admirable inſtance in Cicero's ſecond oration againſt Rullus. This Rullus was tribune of the people, and had propoſed an Agrarian Law; the purpoſe of which was to create a Decemvirate, or ten commiſſioners, with abſolute power for five years over all the lands conquered by the republic, in order to divide them among the citizens. Such laws had often been propoſed by factious magiſtrates, and were always greedily received by the people. Cicero is ſpeaking to the people; he had newly been made conſul by their intereſt; and his firſt attempt is to make them reject this law. The ſubject was extremely delicate, and required much art. He begins with acknowledging all the favours which he had received from the people, in preference to the nobility. He profeſſes himſelf the creature of their power, and of all men the moſt engaged to promote their intereſt. He declares, that he held himſelf to be the conſul of the

people;

people; and that he would always glory in preserving the character of a popular magistrate. But to be popular, he observes, is an ambiguous word. He understood it to import, a steady attachment to the real interest of the people, to their liberty, their ease, and their peace; but by some, he saw, it was abused, and made a cover to their own selfish and ambitious designs. In this manner, he begins to draw gradually nearer to his purpose of attacking the proposal of Rullus; but still with great management and reserve. He protests, that he is far from being an enemy to Agrarian Laws; he gives the highest praises to the Gracchi, those zealous patrons of the people; and assures them, that when he first heard of Rullus's law, he had resolved to support it if he found it for their interest; but that, upon examining it, he found it calculated to establish a dominion that was inconsistent with liberty, and to aggrandize a few men at the expense of the public: and then terminates his exordium, with telling them, that he is going to give his reasons for being of this opinion; but that if his reasons shall not satisfy them, he will give up his own opinion, and embrace theirs. In all this, there was great art. His eloquence produced the intended effect; and the people, with one voice, rejected this Agrarian Law.

Having given these general views of the nature and end of an introduction, I proceed to lay down some rules for the proper composition of it. These are the more necessary, as this is a part of the discourse which requires no small care. It is always of importance to begin well; to make a favourable impression at first setting out; when the minds of the hearers, vacant as yet and free, are most disposed to receive any impression easily. I must add, too, that a good introduction is often found to be extremely difficult. Few parts of the discourse give the composer more trouble, or are attended with more nicety in the execution.

The first rule is, that the introduction should be easy and natural. The subject must always suggest it. It must appear, as Cicero beautifully expresses it, "Effloruisse penitus ex re de "qua tum agitur."* It is too common a fault in introductions, that they are taken from some common-place topic,

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* "To have sprung up, of its own accord, from the matter which is under consideration."

which has no peculiar relation to the ſubject in hand; by which means they ſtand apart, like pieces detached from the reſt of the diſcourſe. Of this kind are Salluſt's introductions prefixed to his Catilinarian and Jugurthine wars. They might as well have been introductions to any hiſtory, or to any other treatiſe whatever: and, therefore, though elegant in themſelves, they muſt be conſidered as blemiſhes in the work, for want of due connexion with it. Cicero, though abundantly correct in this particular in his orations, yet is not ſo in his other works. It appears from a letter of his to Atticus, (L. xvi. 6.) that it was his cuſtom to prepare, at his leiſure, a collection of different introductions or prefaces, ready to be prefixed to any work that he might afterwards publiſh. In conſequence of this ſtrange method of compoſing, it happened to him, to employ the ſame introduction twice, without remembering it; prefixing it to two different works. Upon Atticus informing him of this, he acknowledges the miſtake, and ſends him a new introduction.

In order to render introductions natural and eaſy, it is, in my opinion, a good rule, that they ſhould not be planned, till after one has meditated in his own mind the ſubſtance of his diſcourſe. Then, and not till then, he ſhould begin to think of ſome proper and natural introduction. By taking a contrary courſe, and labouring in the firſt place on an introduction, every one who is accuſtomed to compoſition will often find, that either he is led to lay hold of ſome common-place topic, or that, inſtead of the introduction being accommodated to the diſcourſe, he is obliged to accommodate the whole diſcourſe to the introduction which he had previouſly written. Cicero makes this remark; though, as we have ſeen, his practice was not always conformable to his own rule. "Omnibus rebus "conſideratis, tum denique id quod primum eſt dicendum, poſ- "tremum ſoleo cogitare, quo utar exordio. Nam ſi quando id "primum invenire volui, nullum mihi occurrit, niſi aut exile, "aut nugatorium, aut vulgare."* After the mind has been once warmed and put in train, by cloſe meditation on the ſub- ject,

* "When I have planned and digeſted all the materials of my diſcourſe, it "is my cuſtom to think, in the laſt place, of the introduction with which I am "to begin. For if, at any time, I have endeavoured to invent an introduction "firſt, nothing has ever occurred to me for that purpoſe, but what was tri- "fling, nugatory, and vulgar."

ject, materials for the preface will then suggest themselves much more readily.

In the second place, in an introduction, correctness should be carefully studied in the expression. This is requisite on account of the situation of the hearers. They are then more disposed to criticise than at any other period; they are, as yet, unoccupied with the subject or the arguments; their attention is wholly directed to the speaker's style and manner. Something must be done, therefore, to prepossess them in his favour; though, for the same reasons, too much art must be avoided; for it will be more easily detected at that time, than afterwards; and will derogate from persuasion in all that follows. A correct plainness, and elegant simplicity, is the proper character of an introduction; "ut videamur," says Quintilian, "accurate non callidè dicere."

In the third place, modesty is another character which it must carry. All appearances of modesty are favourable, and prepossessing. If the orator set out with an air of arrogance and ostentation, the self-love and pride of the hearers will be presently awakened, and will follow him with a very suspicious eye throughout all his progress. His modesty should discover itself not only in his expressions at the beginning, but in his whole manner; in his looks, in his gestures, in the tone of his voice. Every auditory take in good part those marks of respect and awe, which are paid to them by one who addresses them. Indeed the modesty of an introduction should never betray any thing mean or abject. It is always of great use to an orator, that, together with modesty and deference to his hearers, he should show a certain sense of dignity, arising from a persuasion of the justice, or importance, of the subject on which he is to speak.

The modesty of an introduction requires, that it promise not too much. "Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem."* This certainly is the general rule, that an orator should not put forth all his strength at the beginning; but should rise and grow upon us, as his discourse advances. There are cases, however, in which it is allowable for him to set out

* He does not lavish at a blaze his fire,
Sudden to glare, and then in smoke expire;
But rises from a cloud of smoke to light,
And pours his specious miracles to sight.

Hor. Ars Poet. Francis.

out from the firſt in a high and bold tone; as, for inſtance, when he riſes to defend ſome cauſe which has been much run down, and decried by the public. Too modeſt a beginning, might be then like a confeſſion of guilt. By the boldneſs and ſtrength of his exordium, he muſt endeavour to ſtem the tide that is againſt him, and to remove prejudices, by encountering them without fear. In ſubjects too of a declamatory nature, and in ſermons, where the ſubject is ſtriking, a magnificent introduction has ſometimes a good effect, if it be properly ſupported in the ſequel. Thus Biſhop Atterbury, in beginning an eloquent ſermon, preached on the 30th of January, the anniverſary of what is called King Charles's Martyrdom, ſets out in this pompous manner: "This is a day of trouble, of rebuke, "and of blaſphemy; diſtinguiſhed in the calendar of our "church, and the annals of our nation, by the ſufferings of "an excellent prince, who fell a ſacrifice to the rage of his re- "bellious ſubjects; and, by his fall, derived infamy, miſery, "and guilt on them, and their ſinful poſterity." Boſſuet, Flechier, and the other celebrated French preachers, very often begin their diſcourſes with laboured and ſublime introductions. Theſe raiſe attention, and throw a luſtre on the ſubject: but let every ſpeaker be much on his guard againſt ſtriking a higher note at the beginning, than he is able to keep up in his progreſs.

In the fourth place, an introduction ſhould uſually be carried on in the calm manner. This is ſeldom the place for vehemence and paſſion. Emotions muſt ariſe, as the diſcourſe advances. The minds of the hearers muſt be gradually prepared, before the ſpeaker can venture on ſtrong and paſſionate ſentiments. The exceptions to this rule are, when the ſubject is ſuch, that the very mention of it naturally awakens ſome paſſionate emotion; or when the unexpected preſence of ſome perſon or object, in a popular aſſembly, inflames the ſpeaker, and makes him break forth with unuſual warmth. Either of theſe will juſtify what is called, the exordium *ab abrupto*. Thus the appearance of Catiline in the ſenate, renders the vehement beginning of Cicero's firſt oration againſt him very natural and proper: "Quouſque tandem, Catilina, abutere patientia noſ- "tra?" And thus Biſhop Atterbury, in preaching from this text,

"Bleſſed

"Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me," ventures on breaking forth with this bold exordium: "And can "any man then be offended in thee, blessed Jesus?" which address to our Saviour, he continues for a page or two, till he enters on the division of his subject. But such introductions as these should be hazarded by very few, as they promise so much vehemence and unction through the rest of the discourse, that it is very difficult to fulfil the expectations of the hearers.

At the same time, though the introduction is not the place in which warm emotions are usually to be attempted, yet I must take notice, that it ought to prepare the way for such as are designed to be raised in subsequent parts of the discourse. The orator should, in the beginning, turn the minds of his hearers towards those sentiments and feelings which he seeks to awaken in the course of his speech. According, for instance, as it is compassion, or indignation, or contempt, on which his discourse is to rest, he ought to sow the seeds of these in his introduction; he ought to begin with breathing that spirit which he means to inspire. Much of the orator's art and ability is shown, in thus striking properly at the commencement, the key note, if we may so express it, of the rest of his oration.

In the fifth place, it is a rule in introductions, not to anticipate any material part of the subject. When topics, or arguments, which are afterwards to be enlarged upon, are hinted at, and, in part, brought forth in the introduction, they lose the grace of novelty upon their second appearance. The impression intended to be made by any capital thought, is always made with the greatest advantage, when it is made entire, and in its proper place.

In the last place, the introduction ought to be proportioned, both in length and in kind, to the discourse that is to follow: in length, as nothing can be more absurd than to erect a very great portico before a small building; and in kind, as it is no less absurd to overcharge, with superb ornaments, the portico of a plain dwelling-house, or to make the entrance to a monument as gay as that to an arbour. Common sense directs, that every part of a discourse should be suited to the strain and spirit of the whole.

These are the principal rules that relate to introductions. They are adapted, in a great measure, equally, to discourses of all

all kinds. In pleadings at the bar, or speeches in public assemblies, particular care must be taken not to employ any introduction of that kind, which the adverse party may lay hold of, and turn to his advantage. To this inconvenience, all those introductions are exposed, which are taken from general and common-place topics; and it never fails to give an adversary a considerable triumph, if, by giving a small turn to something we had said in our exordium, he can appear to convert, to his own favour, the principles with which we had set out, in beginning our attack upon him. In the case of replies, Quintilian makes an observation which is very worthy of notice; that introductions, drawn from something that has been said in the course of the debate, have always a peculiar grace; and the reason he gives for it is just and sensible: "Multum gratiæ exordio est, quod ab actione diversæ partis materiam trahit; hoc ipso, quod non compositum domi, sed ibi atque è re natum; et facilitate famam ingenii auget; et facie simplicis, sumtique è proximo sermonis, fidem quoque acquirit; adeo, ut etiamsi reliqua scripta atque elaborata sint, tamen videatur tota extemporalis oratio, cujus initium nihil preparatum habuisse manifestum est."*

In sermons, such a practice as this cannot take place; and, indeed, in composing sermons, few things are more difficult than to remove an appearance of stiffness from an introduction, when a formal one is used. The French preachers, as I before observed, are often very splendid and lively in their introductions; but, among us, attempts of this kind are not always so successful. When long introductions are formed upon some common-place topic, as the desire of happiness being natural to man, or the like, they never fail of being tedious. Variety should be studied in this part of composition as much as possible; often it may be proper to begin without any introduction at all, unless, perhaps, one or two sentences. Explanatory introductions

* "An introduction, which is founded upon the pleading of the opposite "party, is extremely graceful; for this reason, that it appears not to have "been meditated at home, but to have taken rise from the business, and to "have been composed on the spot. Hence, it gives to the speaker the reputation of a quick invention, and adds weight likewise to his discourse, as "artless and unlaboured; insomuch, that though all the rest of his oration "should be studied and written, yet the whole discourse has the appearance "of being extemporary, as it is evident that the introduction to it was unpremeditated."

troductions from the context, are the most simple of any, and frequently the best that can be used; but as they are in hazard of becoming dry, they should never be long. A historical introduction has, generally, a happy effect to rouze attention; when one can lay hold upon some noted fact, that is connected with the text or the discourse, and, by a proper illustration of it, open the way to the subject that is to be treated of.

After the introduction, what commonly comes next in order, is, the proportion, or enunciation of the subject; concerning which there is nothing to be said, but that it should be as clear and distinct as possible, and expressed in few and plain words, without the least affectation. To this, generally succeeds the division, or the laying down the method of the discourse; on which it is necessary to make some observations. I do not mean, that, in every discourse, a formal division, or distribution of it into parts, is requisite. There are many occasions of public speaking, when this is neither requisite, nor would be proper; when the discourse, perhaps, is to be short, or only one point is to be treated of; or when the speaker does not choose to warn his hearers of the method he is to follow, or of the conclusion to which he seeks to bring them. Order of one kind or other is, indeed, essential to every good discourse; that is, every thing should be so arranged as that what goes before, may give light and force to what follows after. But this may be accomplished by means of a concealed method. What we call division, is, when the method is propounded in form to the hearers.

The discourse, in which this sort of division most commonly takes place, is a sermon; and a question has been moved, whether this method of laying down heads, as it is called, be the best method of preaching. A very able judge, the archbishop of Cambray, in his dialogues on eloquence, declares strongly against it. He observes, that it is a modern invention; that it was never practised by the fathers of the church; and, what is certainly true, that it took its rise from the schoolmen, when metaphysics began to be introduced into preaching. He is of opinion, that it renders a sermon stiff; that it breaks the unity of the discourse; and that, by the natural connexion of one part with another, the attention of the hearers would be carried along the whole with more advantage.

But,

But, notwithstanding his authority and his arguments, I cannot help being of opinion, that the present method of dividing a sermon into heads, ought not to be laid aside. Established practice has now given it so much weight, that, were there nothing more in its favour, it would be dangerous for any preacher to deviate so far from the common track. But the practice itself has also, in my judgment, much reason on its side. If formal partitions give a sermon less of the oratorical appearance, they render it, however, more clear, more easily apprehended, and, of course, more instructive to the bulk of hearers, which is always the main object to be kept in view. The heads of a sermon are great assistances to the memory, and recollection of a hearer. They serve also to fix his attention. They enable him more easily to keep pace with the progress of the discourse; they give him pauses and resting places, where he can reflect on what has been said, and look forward to what is to follow. They are attended with this advantage too, that they give the audience the opportunity of knowing, beforehand, when they are to be released from the fatigue of attention, and thereby make them follow the speaker more patiently: "Reficit audi-"entem," says Quintilian, taking notice of this very advantage of divisions in other discourses, "Reficit audientem certo sin-"gularum partium fine; non aliter quàm facientibus iter, "multum detrahunt fatigationis notata spatia inscriptis lapidi-"bus; nam et exhausti laboris nôsse mensuram voluptati est; "et hortatur ad reliqua fortius exequenda, scire quantum su-"persit."* With regard to breaking the unity of a discourse, I cannot be of opinion that there arises, from that quarter, any argument against the method I am defending. If the unity be broken, it is to the nature of the heads, or topics of which the speaker treats, that this is to be imputed; not to his laying them down in form. On the contrary, if his heads be well chosen, his marking them out, and distinguishing them, in place of impairing the unity of the whole, renders it more conspicuous and complete; by showing how all the parts of a discourse hang upon one another, and tend to one point.

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* "The conclusion of each head is a relief to the hearers; just as upon a "journey, the mile-stones, which are set up on the road, serve to diminish the "traveller's fatigue. For we are always pleased with seeing our labour begin to "lessen; and, by calculating how much remains, are stirred up to finish our "task more cheerfully."

In a sermon, or in a pleading, or any discourse, where division is proper to be used, the most material rules are,

First, That the several parts into which the subject is divided, be really distinct from one another; that is, that no one include another. It were a very absurd division, for instance, if one should propose to treat first, of the advantages of virtue, and next, of those of justice or temperance; because, the first head evidently comprehends the second, as a genus does the species; which method of proceeding involves the subject in indistinctness and disorder.

Secondly, In division, we must take care to follow the order of nature; beginning with the simplest points, such as are easiest apprehended, and necessary to be first discussed; and proceeding thence to those which are built upon the former, and which suppose them to be known. We must divide the subject into those parts, into which most easily and naturally it is resolved; that the subject may seem to split itself, and not to be violently torn asunder: "Dividere," as is commonly said, "non frangere."

Thirdly, The several members of a division ought to exhaust the subject; otherwise we do not make a complete division; we exhibit the subject by pieces and corners only, without giving any such plan as displays the whole.

Fourthly, The terms in which our partitions are expressed, should be as concise as possible. Avoid all circumlocution here. Admit not a single word but what is necessary. Precision is to be studied, above all things, in laying down a method. It is this which chiefly makes a division appear neat and elegant; when the several heads are propounded in the clearest, most expressive, and, at the same time, the fewest words possible. This never fails to strike the hearers agreeably; and is, at the same time, of great consequence towards making the divisions be more easily remembered.

Fifthly, Avoid an unnecessary multiplication of heads. To split a subject into a great many minute parts, by divisions and subdivisions without end, has always a bad effect in speaking. It may be proper in a logical treatise; but it makes an oration appear hard and dry, and unnecessarily fatigues the memory. In a sermon, there may be from three to five, or six heads, including subdivisions; seldom should there be more.

In a sermon, or in a pleading at the bar, few things are of greater consequence, than a proper and happy division. It should be studied with much accuracy and care; for if one take a wrong method at first setting out, it will lead him astray in all that follows. It will render the whole discourse either perplexed or languid; and though the hearers may not be able to tell where the fault or disorder lies, they will be sensible there is a disorder somewhere, and find themselves little affected by what is spoken. The French writers of sermons study neatness and elegance in laying down their heads, much more than the English do; whose distributions, though sensible and just, yet are often inartificial and verbose. Among the French, however, too much quaintness appears in their divisions, with an affectation of always setting out either with two, or with three, general heads of discourse. A division of Massillon's on this text, "It is finished," has been much extolled by the French critics: "This imports," says the preacher, "the consummation, "first, of justice on the part of God; secondly, of wickedness "on the part of men; thirdly, of love on the part of Christ." This also of Bourdaloue's has been much praised, from these words: "My peace I give unto you." "Peace," says he, "first, "to the understanding, by submission to faith; secondly, to the "heart, by submission to the law."

The next constituent part of a discourse, which I mentioned, was Narration or Explication. I put these two together, both because they fall nearly under the same rules, and because they commonly answer the same purpose; serving to illustrate the cause, or the subject of which one treats, before proceeding to argue either on one side or other; or to make an attempt for interesting the passions of the hearers.

In pleading at the bar, Narration is often a very important part of the discourse, and requires to be particularly attended to. Besides its being in any case no easy matter to relate with grace and propriety, there is, in narrations at the bar, a peculiar difficulty. The pleader must say nothing but what is true; and, at the same time, he must avoid saying any thing that will hurt his cause. The facts which he relates, are to be the groundwork of all his future reasoning. To recount them so as to keep strictly within the bounds of truth, and yet to present them under the colours most favourable to his cause; to place,

in the most striking light, every circumstance which is to his advantage, and to soften and weaken such as make against him, demands no small exertion of skill and dexterity. He must always remember, that if he discovers too much art, he defeats his own purpose, and creates a distrust of his sincerity. Quintilian very properly directs, "Effugienda in hac præcipuè parte, "omnis calliditatis suspicio; neque enim se usquam magis cus-"todit judex, quàm cùm narrat orator: nihil tum videatur "fictum; nihil solicitum; omnia potius à causa, quam ab ora-"tore, profecta videantur."*

To be clear and distinct, to be probable, and to be concise, are the qualities which critics chiefly require in narration; each of which carries, sufficiently, the evidence of its importance. Distinctness belongs to the whole train of the discourse, but is especially requisite in narration, which ought to throw light on all that follows. A fact, or a single circumstance left in obscurity, and misapprehended by the judge, may destroy the effect of all the argument and reasoning which the speaker employs. If his narration be improbable, the judge will not regard it; and if it be tedious and diffuse, he will tire of it, and forget it. In order to produce distinctness, besides the study of the general rules of perspicuity which were formerly given, narration requires particular attention to ascertain clearly the names, the dates, the places, and every other material circumstance of the facts recounted. In order to be probable in narration, it is material to enter into the characters of the persons of whom we speak, and to show, that their actions proceeded from such motives as are natural, and likely to gain belief. In order to be as concise as the subject will admit, it is necessary to throw out all superfluous circumstances; the rejection of which will likewise tend to make our narration more forcible, and more clear.

Cicero is very remarkable for his talent of narration; and from the examples in his orations much may be learned. The narration, for instance, in the celebrated oration *pro Milone*, has been often and justly admired. His scope is to show, that though

* "In this part of discourse, the speaker must be very careful to shun every "appearance of art and cunning. For there is no time at which the judge "is more upon his guard, than when the pleader is relating facts. Let noth-"ing then seem feigned: nothing anxiously concealed. Let all that is said, "appear to arise from the cause itself, and not to be the work of the orator."

though in fact Clodius was killed by Milo's or his servants, yet that it was only in self-defence; and that the design had been laid, not by Milo against Clodius, but by Clodius against Milo's life. All the circumstances for rendering this probable are painted with wonderful art. In relating the manner of Milo's setting out from Rome, he gives the most natural description of a family excursion to the country, under which it was impossible that any bloody design could be concealed. "He remained," says he, in the senate-house that day, till all "the business was over. He came home, changed his clothes "deliberately, and waited for some time, till his wife had got "all other things ready for going with him in his carriage to "the country. He did not set out, till such time as Clodius "might easily have been in Rome, if he had not been lying in "wait for Milo by the way. By and by, Clodius met him on "the road, on horse-back, like a man prepared for action, no "carriage, not his wife, as was usual, nor any family equipage "along with him: whilst Milo, who is supposed to be meditating slaughter and assassination, is travelling in a carriage "with his wife, wrapped up in his cloak, embarrassed with "baggage, and attended by a great train of women servants, "and boys" He goes on, describing the rencounter that followed, Clodius's servants attacking those of Milo, and killing the driver of his carriage; Milo jumping out, throwing off his cloak, and making the best defence he could, while Clodius's servants endeavoured to surround him; and then concludes his narration with a very delicate and happy stroke. He does not say in plain words, that Milo's servants killed Clodius, but that "in "the midst of the tumult, Milo's servants, without the orders, "without the knowledge, without the presence of their master, did what every master would have wished his servants, in "a like conjuncture, to have done."*

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* "Milo, cùm in Senatu fuisset eo die, quod Senatus dimissus est domum venit. "Calceos et vestimenta mutavit; paulisper, dum se uxor (ut fit) comparat, "commoratus est: deinde profectus est, id temporis cùm jam Clodius, si quidem eo die Romam venturus erat, redire potuisset. Obviam fit ei Clodius "expeditus, in equo, nulla rheda, nullis impedimentis, nullis Græcis comitibus, "ut solebat; sine uxore, quod nunquam ferè. Cum hic insidiator, qui iter "illud ad cædem faciendam apparâsset, cum uxore veheretur in rheda, penulatus, vulgi magno impedimento, ac muliebri et delicato ancillarum puerorumque comitato. Fit obviam Clodio ante fundum ejus, hora fere undecima,

"aut

In sermons, where there is seldom any occasion for narration, explication of the subject to be discoursed on, comes in the place of narration at the bar, and is to be taken up much on the same tone; that is, it must be concise, clear, and distinct; and in a style correct and elegant, rather than highly adorned. To explain the doctrine of the text with propriety; to give a full and perspicious account of the nature of that virtue or duty which forms the subject of the discourse, is properly the didactic part of preaching; on the right execution of which much depends for all that comes afterward in the way of persuasion. The great art of succeeding in it, is to meditate profoundly on the subject, so as to be able to place it in a clear and strong point of view. Consider what light other passages of scripture throw upon it; consider whether it be a subject nearly related to some other from which it is proper to distinguish it; consider whether it can be illustrated to advantage by comparing it with, or opposing it to, some other thing; by inquiring into causes, or tracing effects; by pointing out examples, or appealing to the feelings of the hearers; that thus, a definite, precise, circumstantial view may be afforded of the doctrine to be inculcated. Let the preacher be persuaded, that by such distinct and apt illustrations of the known truths of religion, it may both display great merit in the way of composition, and, what he ought to consider as far more valuable, render his discourses weighty, instructive, and useful.

LECTURE

"aut non multo secus. Statim complures cum telis in hunc faciunt de loco "superiore impetum: adversi rhedarium occidunt; cùm autem hic de rheda, "rejecta penula desiluisset, seque acri animo defenderet, illi qui erant cum "Clodio, gladiis eductis, partim recurere ad rhedam, ut a tergo Milonem "adorirentur; partim, quod hunc jam interfectum putarent, cædere incipiunt ejus servos qui post erant; ex quibus qui animo fideli in dominum et "præsenti fuerunt, partim occisi sunt; partim cum ad rhedam pugnare viderent et domino succurrere prohiberentur, Milonemque occisum etiam ex "ipso Clodio audirent, et ita esse putarent, fecerunt id servi Milonis (dicam "enim non derivandi criminis causâ, sed ut factum est) neque imperante, neque sciente, neque præsente domino, quod suos quisque servos in tali re "facere voluisset."

LECTURE XXXII.

CONDUCT OF A DISCOURSE. THE ARGUMENTATIVE PART. THE PATHETIC PART. THE PERORATION.

IN treating of the constituent parts of a regular discourse or oration, I have already considered the introduction, the division, and the narration or explication. I proceed next to treat of the argumentative or reasoning part of a discourse. In whatever place, or on whatever subject one speaks, this beyond doubt is of the greatest consequence. For the great end for which men speak on any serious occasion, is to convince their hearers of something being either true, or right, or good; and, by means of this conviction, to influence their practice. Reason and argument make the foundation, as I have often inculcated, of all manly and persuasive Eloquence.

Now, with respect to arguments, three things are requisite. First, the invention of them; secondly, the proper disposition and arrangement of them; and thirdly, the expressing of them in such a style and manner, as to give them their full force.

The first of these, invention, is, without doubt, the most material, and the ground-work of the rest. But, with respect to this, I am afraid it is beyond the power of art to give any real assistance. Art cannot go so far, as to supply a speaker with arguments on every cause, and every subject; though it may be of considerable use in assisting him to arrange, and express those, which his knowledge of the subject has discovered. For it is one thing to discover the reasons that are most proper to convince men, and another, to manage those reasons with most advantage. The latter is all that rhetoric can pretend to.

The ancient rhetoricians did indeed attempt to go much farther than this. They attempted to form rhetoric into a more

complete

complete ſyſtem; and profeſſed not only to aſſiſt public ſpeakers in ſetting off their arguments to moſt advantage, but to ſupply the defect of their invention, and to teach them where to find arguments on every ſubject and cauſe. Hence their doctrine of topics, or, "Loci Communes;" and "ſedes argumentorum," which makes ſo great a figure in the writings of Ariſtotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. Theſe topics, or loci, were no other than general ideas applicable to a great many different ſubjects, which the orator was directed to conſult, in order to find out materials for his ſpeech. They had their intrinſic and extrinſic loci; ſome loci, that were common to all the different kinds of public ſpeaking, and ſome that were peculiar to each. The common or general loci, were ſuch as genus and ſpecies, cauſe and effect, antecedents and conſequents, likeneſs and contrariety, definition, circumſtances of time and place; and a great many more of the ſame kind. For each of the different kinds of public ſpeaking, they had their "loci perſonarum," and "loci "rerum:" as in demonſtrative orations, for inſtance, the heads from which any one could be decried or praiſed; his birth, his country, his education, his kindred, the qualities of his body, the qualities of his mind, the fortune he enjoyed, the ſtations he had filled, &c. and in deliberative orations, the topics that might be uſed in recommending any public meaſure, or diſſuading from it; ſuch as, honeſty, juſtice, facility, profit, pleaſure, glory, aſſiſtance from friends, mortification to enemies, and the like.

The Grecian ſophiſts were the firſt inventors of this artificial ſyſtem of oratory; and they ſhowed a prodigious ſubtility, and fertility in the contrivance of theſe loci. Succeeding rhetoricians, dazzled by the plan, wrought them up into ſo regular a ſyſtem, that one would think they meant to teach how a perſon might mechanically become an orator, without any genius at all. They gave him receipts for making ſpeeches, on all manner of ſubjects. At the ſame time, it is evident, that though this ſtudy of common places might produce very ſhowy academical declamations, it could never produce uſeful diſcourſes on real buſineſs. The loci indeed ſupplied a moſt exuberant fecundity of matter. One who had no other aim, but to talk copiouſly and plauſibly, by conſulting them on every ſubject, and laying hold of all that they ſuggeſted, might diſcourſe

without

without end; and that too, though he had none but the most superficial knowledge of his subject. But such discourse could be no other than trivial. What is truly solid and persuasive, must be drawn "ex visceribus causæ," from a thorough knowledge of the subject, and profound meditation on it. They who would direct students of oratory to any other sources of argumentation, only delude them; and by attempting to render rhetoric too perfect an art, they render it, in truth, a trifling and childish study.

On this doctrine, therefore, of the rhetorical loci, or topics, I think it superfluous to insist. If any think that the knowledge of them may contribute to improve their invention, and extend their views, they may consult Aristotle and Quintilian, or what Cicero has written on this head, in his Treatise De Inventione, his Topica, and second book *De Oratore*. But when they are to prepare a discourse, by which they purpose to convince a judge, or to produce any considerable effect upon an assembly, I would advise them to lay aside their common places, and to think closely of their subject. Demosthenes, I dare say, consulted none of the loci, when he was inciting the Athenians to take arms against Philip; and where Cicero has had recourse to them, his orations are so much the worse on that account.

I proceed to what is of more real use, to point out the assistance that can be given, not with respect to the invention, but with respect to the disposition, and conduct of arguments.

Two different methods may be used by orators in the conduct of their reasoning; the terms of art for which are, the Analytic, and the Synthetic method. The Analytic is, when the orator conceals his intention concerning the point he is to prove, till he has gradually brought his hearers to the designed conclusion. They are led on step by step, from one known truth to another, till the conclusion be stolen upon them, as the natural consequence of a chain of propositions. As, for instance, when one intending to prove the being of a God, sets out with observing that every thing which we see in the world has had a beginning; that whatever has a beginning must have had a prior cause; that in human productions, art shown in the effect necessarily infers design in the cause; and proceeds

proceeds leading you on from one cause to another, till you arrive at one supreme first cause, from whom is derived all the order and design visible in his works. This is much the same with the Socratic method, by which that philosopher silenced the Sophists of his age. It is a very artful method of reasoning; may be carried on with much beauty, and is proper to be used when the hearers are much prejudiced against any truth, and by imperceptible steps must be led to conviction.

But there are few subjects that will admit this method, and not many occasions on which it is proper to be employed. The mode of reasoning most generally used, and most suited to the train of popular speaking, is what is called the synthetic; when the point to be proved is fairly laid down, and one argument after another is made to bear upon it, till the hearers be fully convinced.

Now, in all arguing, one of the first things to be attended to is, among the various arguments which may occur upon a cause, to make a proper selection of such as appear to one's self the most solid; and to employ these as the chief means of persuasion. Every speaker should place himself in the situation of a hearer, and think how he would be affected by those reasons, which he purposes to employ for persuading others. For he must not expect to impose on mankind by mere arts of speech. They are not so easily imposed on, as public speakers are sometimes apt to think. Shrewdness and sagacity are found among all ranks; and the speaker may be praised for his fine discourse, while yet the hearers are not persuaded of the truth of any one thing he has uttered.

Supposing the arguments properly chosen, it is evident that their effect will, in some measure, depend on the right arrangement of them; so as they shall not justle and embarrass one another, but give mutual aid; and bear with the fairest and fullest direction on the point in view. Concerning this, the following rules may be taken:

In the first place, avoid blending arguments confusedly together, that are of a separate nature. All arguments whatever are directed to prove one or other of these three things; that something is true; that it is morally right or fit; or that it is

profitable and good. These make the three great subjects of discussion among mankind; truth, duty, and interest. But the arguments directed towards either of them are generically distinct; and he who blends them all under one topic, which he calls his argument, as in sermons, especially, is too often done, will render his reasoning indistinct, and inelegant. Suppose, for instance, that I am recommending to an audience benevolence, or the love of our neighbour; and that I take my first argument, from the inward satisfaction which a benevolent temper affords; my second, from the obligation which the example of Christ lays upon us to this duty; and my third, from its tendency to procure us the good will of all around us; my arguments are good, but I have arranged them wrong; for my first and third arguments are taken from considerations of interest, internal peace, and external advantages; and between these, I have introduced one which rests wholly upon duty. I should have kept those classes of argument, which are addressed to different principles in human nature, separate and distinct.

In the second place, with regard to the different degrees of strength in arguments, the general rule is, to advance in the way of climax, "ut augeatur semper, et increscat oratio." This especially is to be the course, when the speaker has a clear cause, and is confident that he can prove it fully. He may then adventure to begin with feebler arguments; rising gradually, and not putting forth his whole strength till the last, when he can trust to his making a successful impression on the minds of hearers, prepared by what has gone before. But this rule is not to be always followed. For, if he distrusts his cause, and has but one material argument on which to lay the stress, putting less confidence in the rest, in this case, it is often proper for him to place this material argument in the front; to preoccupy the hearers early, and make the strongest effort at first; that, having removed prejudices, and disposed them to be favourable, the rest of his reasoning may be listened to with more docility. When it happens, that amidst a variety of arguments, there are one or two which we [illegible] are more inconclusive than the rest, and yet prope[illegible] Cicero advises to place these in the middle, as a statio[illegible] spicuous than either the beginning, or the end, of the tr[illegible] reasoning.

In the third place, When our arguments are ſtrong and ſatisfactory, the more they are diſtinguiſhed and treated apart from each other, the better. Each can then bear to be brought out by itſelf, placed in its full light, amplified and reſted upon. But when our arguments are doubtful, and only of the preſumptive kind, it is ſafer to throw them together in a crowd, and to run them into one another: "ut quæ ſunt naturâ imbecilla," as Quintilian ſpeaks, "mutuo auxilio ſuſtineantur;" that though infirm of themſelves, they may ſerve mutually to prop each other. He gives a good example, in the caſe of one who was accuſed of murdering a relation, to whom he was heir. Direct proof was wanting; but, "you expected a ſucceſſion, "and a great ſucceſſion; you were in diſtreſt circumſtances; "you were puſhed to the utmoſt by your creditors; you had "offended your relation, who had made you his heir; you "knew that he was juſt then intending to alter his will; no time "was to be loſt. Each of theſe particulars, by itſelf," ſays the author, "is inconcluſive; but when they are aſſembled in one "group, they have effect."

Of the diſtinct amplification of one perſuaſive argument, we have a moſt beautiful example, in Cicero's oration for Milo. The argument is taken, from a circumſtance of time. Milo was candidate for the Conſulſhip; and Clodius was killed a few days before the election. He aſks, if any one could believe that Milo would be mad enough, at ſuch a critical time, by a moſt odious aſſaſſination, to alienate from himſelf the favour of the people, whoſe ſuffrages he was ſo anxiouſly courting? This argument, the moment it is ſuggeſted, appears to have conſiderable weight. But it was not enough, ſimply to ſuggeſt it; it could bear to be dwelt upon, and brought out into full light. The orator, therefore, draws a juſt and ſtriking picture of that ſolicitous attention with which candidates, at ſuch a ſeaſon, always found it neceſſary to cultivate the good opinion of the people. "Quo tempore," ſays he, "(Scio enim "quam timida ſit ambitio, quantaque et quam ſollicita, cupiditas [illegible]s) omnia, non modo quæ reprehendi palam, ſed [illegible]bſcure cogitari poſſunt, timemus. Rumorem, fabu[illegible]n et falſam, perhorreſcimus; ora omnium atque oc[illegible]mur. Nihil enim eſt tam tenerum, tam aut fragile [illegible] "aut

"aut flexibile, quam voluntas erga nos ſenſuſque civium, qui "non modo improbitati iraſcuntur candidatorum, ſed etiam in "recte factis ſæpe faſtidiunt." From all which he moſt juſtly concludes, "Hunc diem igitur Campi, ſperatum atque "exoptatum, ſibi proponens Milo, cruentis manibus, ſcelus at"que facinus præ ſe ferens, ad illa centuriarum auſpicia ven"iebat? Quam hoc in illo minimum credibile!"* But though ſuch amplifications as this be extremely beautiful, I muſt add a caution,

In the fourth place, againſt extending arguments too far, and multiplying them too much. This ſerves rather to render a cauſe ſuſpected, than to give it weight. An unneceſſary multiplicity of arguments, both burdens the memory, and detracts from the weight of that conviction, which a few well-choſen arguments carry. It is to be obſerved too, that in the amplification of arguments, a diffuſe and ſpreading method, beyond the bounds of reaſonable illuſtration, is always enfeebling. It takes off greatly from that "vis et acumen," which ſhould be the diſtinguiſhing character of the argumentative part of a diſcourſe. When a ſpeaker dwells long on a favourite argument, and ſeeks to turn it into every poſſible light, it almoſt always happens, that, fatigued with the effort, he loſes the ſpirit with which he ſet out; and concludes with feebleneſs what he began with force. There is a proper temperance in reaſoning, as there is in other parts of a diſcourſe.

After due attention given to the proper arrangement of arguments, what is next requiſite for their ſucceſs, is to expreſs them in ſuch a ſtyle, and to deliver them in ſuch a manner, as ſhall

* "Well do I know to what length the timidity goes of ſuch as are candi"dates for public offices, and how many anxious cares and attentions, a can"vaſs for the conſulſhip neceſſarily carries along with it. On ſuch an occa"ſion, we are afraid not only of what we may openly be reproached with, "but of what others may think of us in ſecret. The ſlighteſt rumour, the "moſt improbable tale that can be deviſed to our prejudice, alarms and diſ"concerts us. We ſtudy the countenance, and the looks, of all around us. "For nothing is ſo delicate, ſo frail, and uncertain, as the public favour. Our "fellow-citizens not only are juſtly offended with the vices of candidates, but "even on occaſion of meritorious actions, are apt to conceive capri "guſts. Is there then the leaſt credibility, that Milo, after having fi "ed his attention on the important and wiſhed for day of election, would "dare to have any thoughts of preſenting himſelf before the auguſt aſſembly "the people, as a murderer and aſſaſſin, with his hands imbrued in blood?"

shall give them full force. On these heads I must refer the reader to the directions I have given in treating of style, in former lectures; and to the directions I am afterwards to give concerning pronunciation and delivery.

I proceed, therefore, next, to another essential part of discourse which I mentioned as the fifth in order, that is, the pathetic; in which, if any where, eloquence reigns, and exerts its power. I shall not, in beginning this head, take up time in combating the scruples of those who have moved a question, whether it be consistent with fairness and candour in a public speaker, to address the passions of his audience? This is a question about words alone, and which common sense easily determines. In inquiries after mere truth, in matters of simple information and instruction, there is no question that the passions have no concern, and that all attempts to move them are absurd. Wherever conviction is the object, it is the understanding alone that is to be applied to. It is by argument and reasoning, that one man attempts to satisfy another of what is true, or right, or just; but if persuasion be the object, the case is changed. In all that relates to practice, there is no man who seriously means to persuade another, but addresses himself to his passions more or less; for this plain reason, that passions are the great springs of human action. The most virtuous man, in treating of the most virtuous subject, seeks to touch the heart of him to whom he speaks; and makes no scruple to raise his indignation at injustice, or his pity to the distressed, though pity and indignation be passions.

In treating of this part of eloquence, the antients made the same sort of attempt as they employed with respect to the argumentative part, in order to bring rhetoric into a more perfect system. They inquired metaphysically into the nature of every passion; they gave a definition, and a description of it; they treated of its causes, its effects, and its concomitants; and thence deduced rules for working upon it. Aristotle in partic[illegible]s, in his Treati[illegible] upon Rhetoric, discussed the nature of [illegible]ns with much profoundness and subtility; and what [illegible]ritten on that head, may be read with no small profit, a[illegible]ble piece of moral philosophy; but whether [illegible] will [illegible] effect in rendering an orator more pathetic, is to me doubtful.

doubtful. It is not, I am afraid, any philosophical knowledge of the passions, that can confer this talent. We must be indebted for it to nature, to a certain strong and happy sensibility of mind; and one may be a most thorough adept in all the speculative knowledge that can be acquired concerning the passions, and remain at the same time a cold and dry speaker. The use of rules and instructions on this, or any other part of oratory, is not to supply the want of genius, but to direct it where it is found into its proper channel; to assist it in exerting itself with most advantage, and to prevent the errors and extravagances into which it is sometimes apt to run. On the head of the pathetic, the following directions appear to me to be useful.

The first is to consider carefully, whether the subject admit the pathetic, and render it proper; and if it does, what part of the discourse is the most proper for attempting it. To determine these points belongs to good sense; for it is evident, that there are many subjects which admit not the pathetic at all, and that even in those that are susceptible of it, an attempt to excite the passions in the wrong place, may expose an orator to ridicule. All that can be said in general is, that if we expect any emotion which we raise to have a lasting effect, we must be careful to bring over to our side, in the first place, the understanding and judgment. The hearers must be convinced that there are good and sufficient grounds, for their entering with warmth into the cause. They must be able to justify to themselves the passion which they feel; and remain satisfied that they are not carried away by mere delusion. Unless their minds be brought into this state, although they may have been heated by the orator's discourse, yet, as soon as he ceases to speak, they will resume their ordinary tone of thought; and the emotion which he has raised will die entirely away. Hence most writers assign the pathetic to the peroration or conclusion, as its natural place; and, no doubt, all other things being equal, this is the impression that one would choose to make last, leaving the minds of the hearers warmed with the subject, after argument and reasoning had produced their full effect: but wherever it is introduced, I must advise,

In

In the second place, never to set apart a head of discourse in form, for raising any passion; never give warning that you are about to be pathetic; and call upon your hearers, as is sometimes done, to follow you in the attempt. This almost never fails to prove a refrigerant to passion. It puts the hearers immediately on their guard, and disposes them for criticizing, much more than for being moved. The indirect method of making an impression is likely to be more successful; when you seize the critical moment that is favourable to emotion, in whatever part of the discourse it occurs; and then, after due preparation, throw in such circumstances and present such glowing images, as may kindle their passions before they are aware. This can often be done more happily, in a few sentences inspired by natural warmth, than in a long and studied address.

In the third place, it is necessary to observe, that there is a great difference between shewing the hearers that they ought to be moved, and actually moving them. This distinction is not sufficiently attended to, especially by preachers, who, if they have a head in their sermon to show how much we are bound to be grateful to God, or to be compassionate to the distrest, are apt to imagine this to be a pathetic part. Now, all the arguments you produce to show me, why it is my duty, why it is reasonable and fit, that I should be moved in a certain way, go no further than to dispose or prepare me for entering into such an emotion; but they do not actually excite it. To every emotion or passion, nature has adapted a set of corresponding objects; and, without setting these before the mind, it is not in the power of any orator to raise that emotion. I am warmed with gratitude, I am touched with compassion, not when a speaker shows me that these are noble dispositions, and that it may be my duty to feel them; or when he exclaims against me for my indifference and coldness. All this time, he is speaking only to my reason or conscience. He must describe the kindness and tenderness of my friend; he must set before me the distress suffered by the person for whom he would interest me; then, and not till then, my heart begins to be touched, my gratitude or my compassion begin to flow. The foundation, therefore, of all successful execution in the way of pathetic oratory is, to paint the object of that passion which we wish to

raise, in the most natural and striking manner; to describe it with such circumstances as are likely to awaken it in the minds of others. Every passion is most strongly excited by sensation; as anger, by the feeling of an injury, or the presence of the injurer. Next to the influence of sense, is that of memory; and next to memory is the influence of the imagination. Of this power, therefore, the orator must avail himself, so as to strike the imagination of the hearers with circumstances which, in lustre and steadiness, resemble those of sensation and remembrance. In order to accomplish this,

In the fourth place, the only effectual method is, to be moved yourselves. There are a thousand interesting circumstances suggested by real passion, which no art can imitate, and no refinement can supply. There is obviously a contagion among the passions.

> Ut ridentibus, arrident, sic flentibus adflent,
> Humani vultus.

The internal emotion of the speaker adds a pathos to his words, his looks, his gestures, and his whole manner, which exerts a power almost irresistible over those who hear him.* But on this point, though the most material of all, I shall not now insist, as I have often had occasion before to show, that all attempts towards becoming pathetic, when we are not moved ourselves, expose us to certain ridicule.

Quintilian, who discourses upon this subject with much good sense, takes pains to inform us of the method which he used, when he was a public speaker, for entering into those passions which he wanted to excite in others; setting before his own imagination what he calls, "Phantasiæ" or "Visiones," strong pictures of the distress or indignities which they had suffered, whose cause he was to plead, and for whom he was to interest his hearers; dwelling upon these, and putting himself in their situation, till he was affected by a passion similar

to

* "Quid enim aliud est causæ ut lugentes, in recenti dolore, disertissime "quædam exclamare videantur; et ira nonnunquam in indoctis quoque elo-"quentiam faciat; quàm quod illis inest vis mentis, et veritas ipsa Morum? "quare in iis quæ verisimilia esse volumus, simus ipsi similes eorum qui vere "patiuntur, affectibus; et a tali animo proficiscatur oratio qualem facere "judicem volet. Afficiamur antequam afficere conemur."

Quint. Lib. 6.

to that which the persons themselves had felt.* To this method he attributes all the success he ever had in public speaking; and there can be no doubt, that whatever tends to increase an orator's sensibility, will add greatly to his pathetic powers.

In the fifth place, It is necessary to attend to the proper language of the passions. We should observe in what manner any one expresses himself who is under the power of a real and a strong passion; and we shall always find his language unaffected and simple. It may be animated, indeed, with bold and strong figures, but it will have no ornament or finery. He is not at leisure to follow out the play of imagination. His mind being wholly seized by one object which has heated it, he has no other aim, but to represent that, in all its circumstances, as strongly as he feels it. This must be the style of the orator, when he would be pathetic; and this will be his style, if he speaks from real feeling; bold, ardent, simple. No sort of description will then succeed, but what is written "fervente "calamo." If he stay till he can work up his style, and polish and adorn it, he will infallibly cool his own ardor; and then he will touch the heart no more. His composition will become frigid; it will be the language of one who describes, but who does not feel. We must take notice, that there is a great difference between painting to the imagination, and painting to the heart. The one may be done coolly, and at leisure: the other must always be rapid and ardent. In the former, art and labour may be suffered to appear; in the latter, no effect can follow, unless it seem to be the work of nature only.

In the sixth place, Avoid interweaving any thing of a foreign nature with the pathetic part of a discourse. Beware of all digressions, which may interrupt or turn aside the natural course

* "Ut hominem occisum querar; non omnia quæ in re presenti accidisse "credibile est, in oculis habebo? Non percussor ille subitus erumpet? non "expavescet circumventus? exclamabit, vel rogabit, vel fugiet? non ferientem, non concidentem, videbo? non animo sanguis, et pallor, et gemitus, extremus denique expirantis hiatus, insidet?—Ubi vero miseratione opus erit, nobis ea de quibus querimur accidisse credamus, atque id animo nostro persuadeamus. Nos illi simus, quos gravia, indigna, tristia, passos queramur. Nec agamus rem quasi alienam; sed assumamus parumper illum dolorem. Ita dicemus quæ in simili nostro casu dicturi essemus." Lib. 6.

course of the passion, when once it begins to rise and swell. Sacrifice all beauties, however bright and showy, which would divert the mind from the principal object, and which would amuse the imagination, rather than touch the heart. Hence comparisons are always dangerous, and generally quite improper, in the midst of passion. Beware even of reasoning unseasonably; or, at least, of carrying on a long and subtile train of reasoning, on occasions when the principal aim is to excite warm emotions.

In the last place, Never attempt prolonging the pathetic too much. Warm emotions are too violent to be lasting.* Study the proper time of making a retreat; of making a transition from the passionate to the calm tone; in such a manner, however, as to descend without falling; by keeping up the same strain of sentiment that was carried on before, though now expressing it with more moderation. Above all things, beware of straining passion too far; of attempting to raise it to unnatural heights. Preserve always a due regard to what the hearers will bear; and remember, that he who stops not at the proper point; who attempts to carry them farther, in passion, than they will follow him, destroys his whole design. By endeavouring to warm them too much, he takes the most effectual method of freezing them completely.

Having given these rules concerning the pathetic, I shall give one example from Cicero, which will serve to illustrate several of them, particularly the last. It shall be taken from his last oration against Verres, wherein he describes the cruelty exercised by Verres, when governor of Sicily, against one Gavius, a Roman citizen. This Gavius had made his escape from prison, into which he had been thrown by the governor; and when just embarking at Messina, thinking himself now safe, had uttered some threats, that when he had once arrived at Rome, Verres should hear of him, and be brought to account for having put a Roman citizen in chains. The chief magistrate of Messina, a creature of Verres's, instantly apprehends him,

* "Nunquam debet esse longa miseratio; nam cum veros dolores mitiget "tempus, citius evanescat, necesse est illa, quam dicendo effinximus, imago: "in qua, si moramur, lacrymis fatigatur auditor, et requiescit, et ab illo quem "ceperat impetu, in rationem redit. Non patiamur igitur frigescere hoc opus; "et affectum, cum ad summum perduxerimus, relinquamus; nec speremus "fore, ut aliena mala quisquam diu ploret." Quint. Lib. 6.

him, and gives information of his threatenings. The behaviour of Verres, on this occasion, is described in the most picturesque manner, and with all the colours which were proper, in order to excite against him the public indignation. He thanks the magistrate of Messina for his diligence. Filled with rage, he comes into the forum; orders Gavius to be brought forth, the executioners to attend, and against the laws, and contrary to the well known privileges of a Roman citizen, commands him to be stripped naked, bound, and scourged publickly in a cruel manner. Cicero then proceeds, thus: "Cædebatur virgis, in medio foro Messanæ, civis Romanus, Judices!" Every word rises above another in describing this flagrant enormity; and "Judices" is brought out at the end with the greatest propriety; "Cædebatur virgis, in medio foro Messanæ, civis Romanus, Judices! cum interea, nullus gemitus, nulla vox alia istius miseri, inter dolorem crepitumque plagarum audiebatur, nisi hæc, Civis Romanus sum. Hâc se commemoratione civitatis, omnia verbera depulsurum a corpore arbitrabatur. Is non modo hoc non perfecit ut virgarum vim deprecaretur, sed cum imploraret sæpius usurparetque nomen civis, crux, crux inquam, infelici isto & ærumnoso, qui nunquam istam potestatem viderat, comparabatur. O nomen dulce libertatis! O jus eximium nostræ civitatis! O Lex Porcia, legesque Semproniæ!—Huccine omnia tandem reciderunt, ut civis Romanus, in provincia populi Romani, in oppido fœderatorum, ab eo qui beneficio populi Romani fasces et secures haberet, deligatus, in foro virgis cæderetur?"*

Nothing

* "In the midst of the market-place of Messana, a Roman citizen, O judges! was cruelly scourged with rods; when, in the mean time, amidst the noise of the blows which he suffered, no voice, no complaint of this unhappy man was heard, except this exclamation, Remember that I am a Roman citizen! By pleading this privilege of his birthright, he hoped to have stopped the strokes of the executioner. But his hopes were vain; for, so far was he from being able to obtain thereby any mitigation of his torture, that when he continued to repeat this exclamation, and to plead the rights of a citizen, a cross, a cross, I say, was preparing to be set up for the execution of this unfortunate person, who never before had beheld that instrument of cruel death. O sacred and honoured name of liberty! O boasted and revered privilege of a Roman citizen! O ye Porcian and Sempronian laws! to this issue have ye all come, that a citizen of Rome, in a province of the Roman empire, within an allied city, should publickly, in a market-place, be loaded with chains, and beaten with rods, at the command of one who, from the favour of the Roman people alone, derived all his authority and ensigns of power!"

Nothing can be finer, nor better conducted than this passage. The circumstances are well chosen for exciting both the compassion of his hearers for Gavius, and their indignation against Verres. The style is simple; and the passionate exclamation, the address to liberty and the laws, is well timed, and in the proper style of passion. The orator goes on to exaggerate Verres's cruelty still farther, by another very striking circumstance. He ordered a gibbet to be erected for Gavius, not in the common place of execution, but just by the sea-shore, over against the coast of Italy. "Let him," said he "who boasts "so much of his being a Roman citizen, take a view from his "gibbet of his own country. This base insult over a dying "man is the least part of his guilt. It was not Gavius alone "that Verres meant to insult; but it was you, O Romans! it "was every citizen who now hears me; in the person of "Gavius, he scoffed at your rights, and showed in what con-"tempt he held the Roman name, and Roman liberties."

Hitherto all is beautiful, animated, pathetic; and the model would have been perfect, if Cicero had stopped at this point. But his redundant and florid genius carried him further. He must needs interest, not his hearers only, but the beasts, the mountains, and the stones, against Verres: "Si hæc non ad ci-"ves Romanos, non ad amicos nostræ civitatis, non ad eos qui "populi Romani nomen audissent; denique si non ad homines, "verum ad bestias; atque ut longius progrediar, si in aliqua de-"sertissima solitudine, ad saxa et ad scopulos, hæc conqueri et de-"plorare vellem, tamen omnia muta atque inanima, tantâ et tam "indignâ rerum atrocitate commoverentur."* This, with all the deference due to so eloquent an orator, we must pronounce to be declamatory, not pathetic. This is straining the language of passion too far. Every hearer sees this immediately to be a studied figure of rhetoric; it may amuse him, but instead of inflaming him more, it, in truth, cools his passion. So dangerous it is

* "Were I employed in lamenting those instances of an atrocious oppres-"sion and cruelty, not among an assembly of Roman citizens, not among the "allies of our state, not among those who had ever heard the name of the "Roman people, not even among human creatures, but in the midst of the "brute creation; and to go farther, were I pouring forth my lamentations to "the stones, and to the rocks, in some remote and desert wilderness, even those "mute and inanimate beings would, at the recital of such shocking indignities, "be thrown into commotion."

is to give fcope to a flowery imagination, when one intends to make a ftrong and paffionate impreffion.

No other part of difcourfe remains now to be treated of, except the Peroration, or Conclufion. Concerning this, it is needlefs to fay much, becaufe it muft vary fo confiderably, according to the ftrain of the preceding difcourfe. Sometimes, when the difcourfe has been entirely argumentative, it is fit to conclude with fumming up the arguments, placing them in one view, and leaving the impreffion of them, full and ftrong, on the mind of the audience. For the great rule of a conclufion, and what nature obvioufly fuggefts, is, to place that laft on which we choofe that the ftrength of our caufe fhould reft.

In fermons, inferences from what has been faid, make a common conclufion. With regard to thefe, care fhould be taken, not only that they rife naturally, but, (what is lefs commonly attended to) that they fhould fo much agree with the ftrain of fentiment throughout the difcourfe, as not to break the unity of the fermon. For inferences, how juftly foever they may be deduced from the doctrine of the text, yet have a bad effect, if, at the conclufion of a difcourfe, they introduce fome fubject altogether new, and turn off our attention from the main object to which the preacher had directed our thoughts. They appear, in this cafe, like excrefcences jutting out from the body, which had better have been wanted; and tend to enfeeble the impreffion, which the compofition, as a whole, is calculated to make.

The moft eloquent of the French, perhaps, indeed, of all modern orators, Boffuet, bifhop of Meaux, terminates in a very moving manner, his funeral oration on the great prince of Condé, with this return upon himfelf, and his old age: "Accept, O prince! thefe laft efforts of a voice which you "once well knew. With you, all my funeral difcourfes are "now to end. Inftead of deploring the death of others, hence-"forth, it fhall be my ftudy to learn from you, how my own "may be bleffed. Happy, if warned by thofe grey hairs, of "the account which I muft foon give of my miniftry, I referve, "folely, for that flock whom I ought to feed with the word

"of life, the feeble remains of a voice which now trembles, and "of an ardor, which is now on the point of being extinct."*

In all discourses, it is a matter of importance to hit the precise time of concluding, so as to bring our discourse just to a point; neither ending abruptly and unexpectedly; nor disappointing the expectation of the hearers, when they look for our being done; and continuing to hover round and round the conclusion, till they become heartily tired of us. We should endeavour to go off with a good grace; not to end with a languishing and drawling sentence; but to close with dignity and spirit, that we may leave the minds of the hearers warm; and dismiss them with a favourable impression of the subject, and of the speaker.

* "Agréez ces derniers efforts d'une voix qui vous fut connue. Vous mettrez "fin à tous ces discours. Au lieu de déplorer la mort des autres, grand prince! "dorénavant je veux apprendre de vous, à rendre la mienne sainte. Heureux, "si averti par ces cheveux blancs du compte que je dois rendre de mon ad- "ministration, je réserve au troupeau que je dois nourir de la parole de vie, "les restes d'une voix qui tombe, & d'une ardeur qui s'éteint. These are the last sentences of that oration: but the whole of the peroration from that passage, "Venez peuples, maintenant," &c. though it is too long for insertion, is a great master-piece of pathetic eloquence.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXIII.

PRONUNCIATION, OR DELIVERY.

HAVING treated of ſeveral general heads relating to eloquence, or public ſpeaking, I now proceed to another very important part of the ſubject yet remaining, that is, Pronunciation, or Delivery of a Diſcourſe. How much ſtreſs was laid upon this by the moſt eloquent of all orators, Demoſthenes, appears from a noted ſaying of his, related both by Cicero and Quintilian; when being aſked what was the firſt point in oratory? he anſwered, delivery; and being aſked, what was the ſecond? and afterwards, what was the third? he ſtill anſwered, delivery. There is no wonder, that he ſhould have rated this ſo high, and that for improving himſelf in it, he ſhould have employed thoſe aſſiduous and painful labours, which all the ancients take ſo much notice of; for, beyond doubt, nothing is of more importance. To ſuperficial thinkers, the management of the voice and geſture, in public ſpeaking, may appear to relate to decoration only, and to be one of the inferior arts of catching an audience. But this is far from being the caſe. It is intimately connected with what is, or ought to be, the end of all public ſpeaking, perſuaſion; and therefore deſerves the ſtudy of the moſt grave and ſerious ſpeakers, as much as of thoſe, whoſe only aim it is to pleaſe.

For, let it be conſidered, whenever we addreſs ourſelves to others by words, our intention certainly is to make ſome impreſſion on thoſe to whom we ſpeak; it is to convey to them our own ideas and emotions. Now the tone of our voice, our looks, and geſtures, interpret our ideas and emotions no leſs than words do; nay, the impreſſion they make on others, is frequently much ſtronger than any that words can make. We often ſee that an expreſſive look, or a paſſionate cry, unaccompanied

panied by words, convey to others more forcible ideas, and rouse within them stronger passions, than can be communicated by the most eloquent discourse. The signification of our sentiments, made by tones and gestures, has this advantage above that made by words, that it is the language of nature. It is that method of interpreting our mind, which nature has dictated to all, and which is understood by all; whereas, words are only arbitrary, conventional symbols of our ideas, and, by consequence, must make a more feeble impression. So true is this, that to render words fully significant, they must, almost in every case, receive some aid from the manner of pronunciation and delivery; and he who, in speaking, should employ bare words, without enforcing them by proper tones and accents, would leave us with a faint and indistinct impression, often with a doubtful and ambiguous conception, of what he had delivered. Nay, so close is the connexion between certain sentiments and the proper manner of pronouncing them, that he who does not pronounce them after that manner, can never persuade us, that he believes, or feels, the sentiments themselves. His delivery may be such, as to give the lie to all that he asserts. When Marcus Callidius accused one of an attempt to poison him, but enforced his accusation in a languid manner, and without any warmth or earnestness of delivery, Cicero, who pleaded for the accused person, improved this into an argument of the falsity of the charge, "An tu, M. "Callidi, nisi fingeres, sic ageres?" In Shakespeare's Richard II. the Dutchess of York thus impeaches the sincerity of her husband:

Pleads he in earnest?—Look upon his face,
His eyes do drop no tears; his prayers are jest;
His words come from his mouth; ours, from our breast;
He prays but faintly, and would be denied;
We pray with heart and soul.

But, I believe it is needless to say any more, in order to show the high importance of a good delivery. I proceed, therefore, to such observations as appear to me most useful to be made on this head.

The great objects which every public speaker will naturally have in his eye in forming his delivery, are, first, to speak so as to be fully and easily understood by all who hear him; and next

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to ſpeak with grace and force, ſo as to pleaſe and to move his audience. Let us conſider what is moſt important with reſpect to each of theſe.*

In order to be fully and eaſily underſtood, the four chief requiſites are a due degree of loudneſs of voice, diſtinctneſs, ſlowneſs, and propriety of pronunciation.

The firſt attention of every public ſpeaker, doubtleſs, muſt be, to make himſelf be heard by all thoſe to whom he ſpeaks. He muſt endeavour to fill with his voice the ſpace occupied by the aſſembly. This power of voice, it may be thought, is wholly a natural talent. It is ſo in a good meaſure; but, however, may receive conſiderable aſſiſtance from art. Much depends for this purpoſe on the proper pitch, and management of the voice. Every man has three pitches in his voice; the high, the middle, and the low one. The high, is that which he uſes in calling aloud at ſome one at a diſtance. The low is, when he approaches to a whiſper. The middle is, that which he employs in common converſation, and which he ſhould generally uſe in public diſcourſe. For it is a great miſtake, to imagine that one muſt take the higheſt pitch of his voice, in order to be well heard by a great aſſembly. This is confounding two things which are different, loudneſs, or ſtrength of ſound, with the key, or note on which we ſpeak. A ſpeaker may render his voice louder, without altering the key; and we ſhall always be able to give moſt body, moſt perſevering force of ſound, to that pitch of voice, to which in converſation we are accuſtomed. Whereas, by ſetting out on our higheſt pitch or key, we certainly allow ourſelves leſs compaſs, and are likely to ſtrain and outrun our voice before we have done. We ſhall fatigue ourſelves, and ſpeak with pain; and whenever a man ſpeaks with pain to himſelf, he is always heard with pain by his audience. Give the voice therefore full ſtrength and ſwell of ſound; but always pitch it on your ordinary ſpeaking key. Make it a conſtant rule never to utter a greater quantity of voice, than you can afford without pain to yourſelves, and without any extraordinary effort. As long as you keep within theſe bounds, the other organs of ſpeech

* On this whole ſubject, Mr. Sheridan's Lectures on elocution, are very worthy of being conſulted; and ſeveral hints are here taken from them.

will be at liberty to discharge their several offices with ease; and you will always have your voice under command. But whenever you transgress these bounds, you give up the reins, and have no longer any management of it. It is an useful rule too, in order to be well heard, to fix our eye on some of the most distant persons in the assembly, and to consider ourselves as speaking to them. We naturally and mechanically utter our words with such a degree of strength, as to make ourselves be heard by one to whom we address ourselves, provided he be within the reach of our voice. As this is the case in common conversation, it will hold also in public speaking. But remember, that in public as well as in conversation, it is possible to offend by speaking too loud. This extreme hurts the ear, by making the voice come upon it in rumbling indistinct masses; besides its giving the speaker the disagreeable appearance of one who endeavours to compel assent, by mere vehemence and force of sound.

In the next place, to being well heard and clearly understood, distinctness of articulation contributes more, perhaps, than mere loudness of sound. The quantity of sound necessary to fill even a large space, is smaller than is commonly imagined; and with distinct articulation, a man of a weak voice will make it reach farther, than the strongest voice can reach without it. To this, therefore, every public speaker ought to pay great attention. He must give every sound which he utters its due proportion, and make every syllable, and even every letter in the word which he pronounces, be heard distinctly; without slurring, whispering, or suppressing any of the proper sounds.

In the third place, in order to articulate distinctly, moderation is requisite with regard to the speed of pronouncing. Precipitancy of speech, confounds all articulation, and all meaning. I need scarcely observe, that there may be also an extreme on the opposite side. It is obvious that the lifeless, drawling pronunciation, which allows the minds of the hearers to be always outruning the speaker, must render every discourse insipid and fatiguing. But the extreme of speaking too fast is much more common, and requires the more to be guarded against, because, when it has grown up into a habit, few errors are more difficult to be corrected. To pronounce with a proper-

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er degree of ſlowneſs, and with full and clear articulation, is the firſt thing to be ſtudied by all who begin to ſpeak in public; and cannot be too much recommended to them. Such a pronunciation, gives weight and dignity to their diſcourſe. It is a great aſſiſtance to the voice, by the pauſes and reſts which it allows it more eaſily to make; and it enables the ſpeaker to ſwell all his ſounds, both with more force and more muſic. It aſſiſts him alſo in preſerving a due command of himſelf; whereas a rapid and hurried manner, is apt to excite that flutter of ſpirits, which is the greateſt enemy to all right execution in the way of oratory. "Promptum ſit os," ſays Quintilian, "non præceps, moderatum, non lentum."

After theſe fundamental attentions to the pitch and management of the voice, to diſtinct articulation, and to a proper degree of ſlowneſs of ſpeech, what a public ſpeaker muſt, in the fourth place, ſtudy, is, propriety of pronunciation; or the giving to every word, which he utters, that ſound which the moſt polite uſage of the language appropriates to it; in oppoſition to broad, vulgar, or provincial pronunciation. This is requiſite, both for ſpeaking intelligibly, and for ſpeaking with grace or beauty. Inſtructions concerning this article, can be given by the living voice only. But there is one obſervation, which it may not be improper here to make. In the Engliſh language, every word which conſiſts of more ſyllables than one, has one accented ſyllable. The accent reſts ſometimes on the vowel, ſometimes on the conſonant. Seldom or never is there more than one accented ſyllable in any Engliſh word, however long; and the genius of the language requires the voice to mark that ſyllable by a ſtronger percuſſion, and to paſs more ſlightly over the reſt. Now, having once learned the proper ſeats of theſe accents, it is an important rule to give every word juſt the ſame accent in public ſpeaking, as in common diſcourſe. Many perſons err in this reſpect. When they ſpeak in public, and with ſolemnity, they pronounce the ſyllables in a different manner from what they do at other times. They dwell upon them, and protract them; they multiply accents on the ſame word; from a miſtaken notion, that it gives gravity and force to their diſcourſe, and adds to the pomp of public declamation. Whereas, this is one of the greateſt faults that can be committed in pronunciation; it makes what is called, a theatrical, or mouth-

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ing manner; and gives an artificial affected air to speech, which detracts greatly both from its agreeableness, and its impression.

I proceed to treat next of those higher parts of delivery, by studying which, a speaker has something farther in view than merely to render himself intelligible, and seeks to give grace and force to what he utters. These may be comprised under four heads, emphasis, pauses, tones, and gestures. Let me only premise, in general, to what I am to say concerning them, that attention to these articles of delivery is by no means to be confined, as some might be apt to imagine, to the more elaborate, and pathetic parts of a discourse. There is, perhaps, as great attention requisite, and as much skill displayed, in adapting emphases, pauses, tones, and gestures, properly to calm and plain speaking; and the effect of a just and graceful delivery will, in every part of a subject, be found of high importance for commanding attention, and enforcing what is spoken.

First, let us consider emphasis; by this, is meant a stronger and fuller sound of voice, by which we distinguish the accented syllable of some word, on which we design to lay particular stress, and to show how it affects the rest of the sentence. Sometimes the emphatic word must be distinguished by a particular tone of voice, as well as by a stronger accent. On the right management of the emphasis, depends the whole life and spirit of every discourse. If no emphasis be placed on any words, not only is discourse rendered heavy and lifeless, but the meaning left often ambiguous. If the emphasis be placed wrong, we pervert and confound the meaning wholly. To give a common instance; such a simple question as this: "Do "you ride to town to-day?" is capable of no fewer than four different acceptations, according as the emphasis is differently placed on the words. If it be pronounced thus; do *you* ride to town to day? the answer may naturally be, No; I send my servant in my stead. If thus; Do you *ride* to town to-day? Answer, No; I intend to walk. Do you ride *to town* to-day? No; I ride out into the fields. Do you ride to town *to-day?* No; but I shall to-morrow. In like manner, in solemn discourse, the whole force and beauty of an expression often depends on the accented word; and we may present to the hearers quite different views of the same sentiment, by placing the emphasis differently. In the following words of our Saviour, observe

serve in what different light the thought is placed, according as the words are pronounced. "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" *betrayest* thou—makes the reproach turn, on the infamy of treachery. Betrayest *thou*—makes it rest, upon Judas's connexion with his master. Betrayest thou the *Son of Man*—rests it, upon our Saviour's personal character and eminence. Betrayest thou the Son of Man *with a kiss?* turns it, upon his prostituting the signal of peace and friendship, to the purpose of a mark of destruction.

In order to acquire the proper management of the emphasis, the great rule, and indeed the only rule possible to be given is, that the speaker study to attain a just conception of the force and spirit of those sentiments which he is to pronounce. For to lay the emphasis with exact propriety, is a constant exercise of good sense and attention. It is far from being an inconsiderable attainment. It is one of the greatest trials of a true and just taste; and must arise from feeling delicately ourselves, and from judging accurately, of what is fittest to strike the feeling of others. There is as great a difference between a chapter of the bible, or any other piece of plain prose, read by one who places the several emphases every where with taste and judgment, and by one who neglects or mistakes them, as there is between the same tune played by the most masterly hand, or by the most bungling performer.

In all prepared discourses, it would be of great use, if they were read over or rehearsed in private, with this particular view, to search for the proper emphases before they were pronounced in public; marking, at the same time, with a pen, the emphatical words in every sentence, or at least in the most weighty and affecting parts of the discourse, and fixing them well in memory. Were this attention oftener bestowed, were this part of pronunciation studied with more exactness, and not left to the moment of delivery, as is commonly done, public speakers would find their care abundantly repaid, by the remarkable effects which it would produce upon their audience. Let me caution, at the same time, against one error, that of multiplying emphatical words too much. It is only by a prudent reserve in the use of them, that we can give them any weight. If they recur too often; if a speaker attempts to render every thing which he says of high importance, by a multitude of strong emphases,

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we ſoon learn to pay little regard to them. To crown every ſentence with emphatical words, is like crowding all the pages of a book with Italic characters, which, as to the effect, is juſt the ſame with uſing no ſuch diſtinctions at all.

Next to emphaſis, the pauſes in ſpeaking demand attention. Theſe are of two kinds; firſt, emphatical pauſes: and next, ſuch as mark the diſtinctions of ſenſe. An emphatical pauſe is made, after ſomething has been ſaid of peculiar moment, and, on which we want to fix the hearer's attention. Sometimes, before ſuch a thing is ſaid, we uſher it in with a pauſe of this nature. Such pauſes have the ſame effect, as a ſtrong emphaſis, and are ſubject to the ſame rules; eſpecially to the caution juſt now given, of not repeating them too frequently. For as they excite uncommon attention, and of courſe raiſe expectation, if the importance of the matter be not fully anſwerable to ſuch expectation, they occaſion diſappointment and diſguſt.

But the moſt frequent and the principal uſe of pauſes, is to mark the diviſions of the ſenſe, and at the ſame time to allow the ſpeaker to draw his breath; and the proper and graceful adjuſtment of ſuch pauſes, is one of the moſt nice and difficult articles in delivery. In all public ſpeaking, the management of the breath requires a good deal of care, ſo as not to be obliged to divide words from one another, which have ſo intimate a connexion, that they ought to be pronounced with the ſame breath, and without the leaſt ſeparation. Many a ſentence is miſerably mangled, and the force of the emphaſis totally loſt, by diviſions being made in the wrong place. To avoid this, every one, while he is ſpeaking, ſhould be very careful to provide a full ſupply of breath for what he is to utter. It is a great miſtake to imagine, that the breath muſt be drawn, only at the end of a period, when the voice is allowed to fall. It can eaſily be gathered at the intervals of the period, when the voice is only ſuſpended for a moment; and by this management, one may have always a ſufficient ſtock for carrying on the longeſt ſentences, without improper interruptions.

If any one, in public ſpeaking, ſhall have formed to himſelf a certain melody or tune, which requires reſt and pauſes of its own, diſtinct from thoſe of the ſenſe, he has, for certain contracted one of the worſt habits into which a public ſpeaker can fall. It is the ſenſe which ſhould always rule the pauſes of the

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voice; for wherever there is any sensible suspension of the voice, the hearer is always led to expect somewhat corresponding in the meaning. Pauses in public discourse, must be formed upon the manner in which we utter ourselves in ordinary, sensible conversation; and not upon the stiff artificial manner which we acquire, from reading books according to the common punctuation. The general run of punctuation is very arbitrary; often capricious and false; and dictates an uniformity of tone in the pauses, which is extremely disagreeable; for we are to observe, that to render pauses graceful and expressive, they must not only be made in the right place, but also accompanied with a proper tone of voice, by which the nature of these pauses is intimated; much more then by the length of them, which can never be exactly measured. Sometimes it is only a slight and simple suspension of voice that is proper; sometimes a degree of cadence in the voice is required; and sometimes that peculiar tone and cadence, which denotes the sentence finished. In all these cases, we are to regulate ourselves, by attending to the manner in which nature teaches us to speak, when engaged in real and earnest discourse with others.

When we are reading or reciting verse, there is a peculiar difficulty in making the pauses justly. The difficulty arises from the melody of verse, which dictates to the ear pauses or rests of its own; and to adjust and compound these properly with the pauses of the sense, so as neither to hurt the ear, nor offend the understanding, is so very nice a matter, that it is no wonder we so seldom meet with good readers of poetry. There are two kinds of pauses that belong to the music of verse; one is, the pause at the end of the line; and the other, the cæsural pause in the middle of it. With regard to the pause at the end of the line, which marks that strain or verse to be finished, rhyme renders this always sensible, and in some measure compels us to observe it in our pronunciation. In blank verse, where there is a greater liberty permitted of running the lines into one another, sometimes without any suspension in the sense, it has been made a question, Whether in reading such verse with propriety, any regard at all should be paid to the close of a line? On the stage, where the appearance of speaking in verse should always be avoided, there can, I think, be no doubt, that

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the close of such lines as make no pause in the sense, should not be rendered perceptible to the ear. But on other occasions, this were improper: for what is the use of melody, or for what end has the poet composed in verse, if in reading his lines, we suppress his numbers; and degrade them, by our pronunciation, into mere prose? We ought, therefore, certainly to read blank verse so, as to make every line sensible to the ear. At the same time in doing so, every appearance of sing-song and tone must be carefully guarded against. The close of the line, where it makes no pause in the meaning, ought to be marked, not by such a tone as is used in finishing a sentence; but without either letting the voice fall, or elevating it, it should be marked only by such a slight suspension of sound, as may distinguish the passage from one line to another, without injuring the meaning.

The other kind of musical pause, is that which falls somewhere about the middle of the verse, and divides it into two hemistichs; a pause, not so great as that which belongs to the close of the line, but still sensible to an ordinary ear. This, which is called the cæsural pause, in the French heroic verse falls uniformly in the middle of the line. In English, it may fall after the 4th, 5th, 6th, or 7th syllables in the line, and no other. Where the verse is so constructed, that this cæsural pause coincides with the slightest pause or division in the sense, the line can be read easily; as in the two first verses of Mr. Pope's Messiah,

> Ye nymphs of Solyma! begin the song;
> To heav'nly themes, sublimer strains belong.

But if it shall happen that words, which have such a strict and intimate connexion, as not to bear even a momentary separation, are divided from one another by this cæsural pause, we then feel a sort of struggle between the sense and the sound, which renders it difficult to read such lines gracefully. The rule of proper pronunciation in such cases is, to regard only the pause which the sense forms; and to read the line accordingly. The neglect of the cæsural pause, may make the line sound somewhat unharmoniously; but the effect would be much worse, if the sense were sacrificed to the sound. For instance, in the following line of Milton,

——What

————————What in me is dark,
Illumine; what is low, raise and support.

The sense clearly dictates the pause after "illumine," at the end of the third syllable, which, in reading, ought to be made accordingly; though, if the melody only were to be regarded, "illumine" should be connected with what follows, and the pause not made till the 4th or 6th syllable. So, in the following line of Mr. Pope's (Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot:)

I sit, with sad civility I read.

The ear plainly points out the cæsural pause as falling after "sad," the 4th syllable. But it would be very bad reading to make any pause there, so as to separate "sad" and "civility." The sense admits of no other pause than after the second syllable "sit," which therefore must be the only pause made in the reading.

I proceed to treat next of tones in pronunciation, which are different both from emphasis and pauses; consisting in the modulation of the voice, the notes or variations of sound which we employ in public speaking. How much of the propriety, the force and grace of discourse, must depend on these, will appear from this single consideration; that to almost every sentiment we utter, more especially to every strong emotion, nature hath adapted some peculiar tone of voice; insomuch, that he who should tell another that he was very angry, or much grieved, in a tone which did not suit such emotions, instead of being believed, would be laughed at. Sympathy is one of the most powerful principles by which persuasive discourse works its effect. The speaker endeavours to transfuse into his hearers his own sentiments and emotions; which he can never be successful in doing, unless he utters them in such a manner as to convince the hearers that he feels them.* The proper language and

* "All that passes in the mind of man may be reduced to two classes, which "I call ideas and emotions. By ideas, I mean all thoughts which rise, and "pass in succession in the mind. By emotions, all exertions of the mind in "arranging, combining, and separating its ideas; as well as all the effects produced on the mind itself by those ideas; from the more violent agitation of "the passions, to the calmer feelings produced by the operation of the intellect "and the fancy. In short, thought is the object of the one, internal feeling of "the other. That which serves to express the former, I call the language of "ideas; and the latter, the language of emotions. Words are the signs of "the one, tones of the other. Without the use of these two sorts of language, "it is impossible to communicate through the ear all that passes in the mind "of man."
Sheridan on the Art of Reading.

and expreſſion of tones, therefore, deſerves to be attentively ſtudied by every one who would be a ſucceſsful orator.

The greateſt and moſt material inſtruction which can be given for this purpoſe is, to form the tones of public ſpeaking upon the tones of ſenſible and animated converſation. We may obſerve that every man, when he is much in earneſt in common diſcourſe, when he is engaged in ſpeaking on ſome ſubject which intereſts him nearly, has an eloquent or perſuaſive tone and manner. What is the reaſon of our being often ſo frigid and unperſuaſive in public diſcourſe, but our departing from the natural tone of ſpeaking, and delivering ourſelves in an affected artificial manner? Nothing can be more abſurd than to imagine, that as ſoon as one mounts a pulpit, or riſes in a public aſſembly, he is inſtantly to lay aſide the voice with which he expreſſes himſelf in private; to aſſume a new, ſtudied tone, and a cadence altogether foreign to his natural manner. This has vitiated all delivery; this has given riſe to cant and tedious monotony, in the different kinds of modern public ſpeaking, eſpecially in the pulpit. Men departed from nature; and ſought to give a beauty or force, as they imagined, to their diſcourſe, by ſubſtituting certain ſtudied muſical tones, in the room of the genuine expreſſions of ſentiment, which the voice carries in natural diſcourſe. Let every public ſpeaker guard againſt this error. Whether he ſpeak in a private room, or in a great aſſembly, let him remember that he ſtill ſpeaks. Follow nature: conſider how ſhe teaches you to utter any ſentiment or feeling of your heart. Imagine a ſubject of debate ſtarted in converſation among grave and wiſe men, and yourſelf bearing a ſhare in it. Think after what manner, with what tones and inflexions of voice, you would on ſuch an occaſion expreſs yourſelf, when you were moſt in earneſt, and ſought moſt to be liſtened to. Carry theſe with you to the bar, to the pulpit, or to any public aſſembly; let theſe be the foundation of your manner of pronouncing there; and you will take the ſureſt method of rendering your delivery both agreeable and perſuaſive.

I have ſaid, let theſe converſation tones be the *foundation* of public pronunciation; for, on ſome occaſions, ſolemn public ſpeaking requires them to be exalted beyond the ſtrain of common diſcourſe. In a formal ſtudied oration, the elevation of the

the ſtyle, and the harmony of the ſentences, prompt, almoſt neceſſarily, a modulation of voice more rounded, and bordering more upon muſic, than converſation admits. This gives riſe to what is called the declaiming manner. But though this mode of pronunciation runs conſiderably beyond ordinary diſcourſe, yet ſtill it muſt have, for its baſis, the natural tones of grave and dignified converſation. I muſt obſerve, at the ſame time, that the conſtant indulgence of a declamatory manner, is not favourable either to good compoſition, or good delivery; and is in hazard of betraying public ſpeakers into that monotony of tone and cadence, which is ſo generally complained of. Whereas, he who forms the general run of his delivery upon a ſpeaking manner, is not likely ever to become diſagreeable through monotony. He will have the ſame natural variety in his tones, which a perſon has in converſation. Indeed, the perfection of delivery requires both theſe different manners, that of ſpeaking with livelineſs and eaſe, and that of declaiming with ſtatelineſs and dignity, to be poſſeſſed by one man; and to be employed by him, according as the different parts of his diſcourſe require either the one or the other. This is a perfection which not many attain; the greateſt part of public ſpeakers allowing their delivery to be formed altogether accidentally; according as ſome turn of voice appears to them moſt beautiful, or ſome artificial model has caught their fancy; and acquiring, by this means, a habit of pronunciation, which they can never vary. But the capital direction, which ought never to be forgotten, is, to copy the proper tones for expreſſing every ſentiment from thoſe which nature dictates to us, in converſation with others; to ſpeak always with her voice; and not to form to ourſelves a fantaſtic public manner, from an abſurd fancy of its being more beautiful than a natural one.*

It now remains to treat of geſture, or what is called action in public diſcourſe. Some nations animate their words in common

* "Loquere," (ſays an Author of the 16th century, who has written a Treatiſe in verſe, de Geſtu et Voce Oratoris)

——"Loquere; hoc vitium commune, loquatur
"Ut nemo; at tenſâ declamitat omnia voce.
"Tu loquere; ut mos eſt hominum; boat & latrat ille;
"Ille ululat; rudit hic; (fari ſi talia dignum eſt)
"Non hominem vox ulla ſonat ratione loquentem."

JOANNES LUCAS, de Geſtu et Voce, Lib. II. Paris, 1675.

common conversation, with many more motions of the body than others do. The French and the Italians are, in this respect, much more sprightly than we. But there is no nation, hardly any person so phlegmatic, as not to accompany their words with some actions and gesticulations, on all occasions, when they are much in earnest. It is therefore unnatural in a public speaker, it is inconsistent with that earnestness and seriousness which he ought to show in all affairs of moment, to remain quite unmoved in his outward appearance; and to let the words drop from his mouth, without any expression of meaning, or warmth in his gesture.

The fundamental rule, as to propriety of action, is undoubtedly the same with what I gave as to propriety of tone. Attend to the looks and gestures, in which earnestness, indignation, compassion, or any other emotion, discovers itself to most advantage in the common intercourse of men; and let these be your model. Some of these looks and gestures are common to all men; and there are also certain peculiarities of manner which distinguish every individual. A public speaker must take that manner which is most natural to himself. For it is here, just as in tones. It is not the business of a speaker to form to himself a certain set of motions and gestures, which he thinks most becoming and agreeable, and to practise these in public, without their having any correspondence to the manner which is natural to him in private. His gestures and motions ought all to carry that kind of expression which nature has dictated to him; and, unless this be the case, it is impossible, by means of any study, to avoid their appearing stiff and forced.

However, although nature must be the groundwork, I admit that there is room in this matter for some study and art. For many persons are naturally ungraceful in the motions which they make; and this ungracefulness might, in part at least, be reformed by application and care. The study of action in public speaking, consists chiefly in guarding against awkward and disagreeable motions, and in learning to perform such as are natural to the speaker, in the most becoming manner. For this end, it has been advised by writers on this subject, to practise before a mirror, where one may see and judge of his own gestures. But I am afraid, persons are not always the best judges of the gracefulness of their own motions; and one may

declaim

declaim long enough before a mirror, without correcting any of his faults. The judgment of a friend, whose good taste they can trust, will be found of much greater advantage to beginners, than any mirror they can use. With regard to particular rules concerning action and gesticulation, Quintilian has delivered a great many, in the last chapter of the 11th book of his institutions; and all the modern writers on this subject have done little else but translate them. I am not of opinion that such rules, delivered either by the voice or on paper, can be of much use, unless persons saw them exemplified before their eyes.*

I shall only add further on this head, that in order to succeed well in delivery, nothing is more necessary than for a speaker to guard against a certain flutter of spirits, which is peculiarly incident to those who begin to speak in public. He must endeavour above all things to be recollected, and master of himself. For this end, he will find nothing of more use to him, than to study to become wholly engaged in his subject; to be possessed with a sense of its importance or seriousness; to be concerned much more to persuade, than to please. He will generally please most, when pleasing is not his sole nor chief aim. This is the only rational and proper method of raising one's

* The few following hints only I shall adventure to throw out, in case they may be of any service. When speaking in public, one should study to preserve as much dignity as possible in the whole attitude of the body. An erect posture is generally to be chosen; standing firm, so as to have the fullest and freest command of all his motions; any inclination which is used, should be forwards towards the hearers, which is a natural expression of earnestness. As for the countenance, the chief rule is, that it should correspond with the nature of the discourse, and when no particular emotion is expressed, a serious and manly look is always the best. The eyes should never be fixed close on any one object, but move easily round the audience. In the motions made with the hands, consist the chief part of gesture in speaking. The ancients condemned all motions performed by the left hand alone; but I am not sensible that these are always offensive, though it is natural for the right hand to be more frequently employed. Warm emotions demand the motion of both hands corresponding together. But whether one gesticulates with one or with both hands, it is an important rule, that all his motions should be free and easy. Narrow and straitened movements are generally ungraceful; for which reason, motions made with the hands are directed to proceed from the shoulder, rather than from the elbow. Perpendicular movements too with the hands, that is, in the straight line up and down, which Shakespeare in Hamlet calls "sawing the air with the hand," are seldom good. Oblique motions are, in general, the most graceful. Too sudden and nimble motions should be likewise avoided. Earnestness can be fully expressed without them. Shakespeare's directions on this head, are full of good sense; "use all gently," says he, "and in the very torrent and tempest of passion, acquire a temperance that may give it smoothness."

one's self above that timid and bashful regard to an audience, which is so ready to disconcert a speaker, both as to what he is to say, and as to his manner of saying it.

I cannot conclude, without an earnest admonition to guard against all affectation, which is the certain ruin of good delivery. Let your manner, whatever it is, be your own; neither imitated from another, nor assumed upon some imaginary model, which is unnatural to you. Whatever is native, even though accompanied with several defects, yet is likely to please; because it shows us a man; because it has the appearance of coming from the heart. Whereas a delivery, attended with several acquired graces and beauties, if it be not easy and free, if it betray the marks of art and affectation, never fails to disgust. To attain any extremely correct, and perfectly graceful delivery, is what few can expect; so many natural talents being requisite to concur in forming it. But to attain, what as to the effect is very little inferior, a forcible and persuasive manner, is within the power of most persons; if they will only unlearn false and corrupt habits; if they will allow themselves to follow nature, and will speak in public, as they do in private, when they speak in earnest, and from the heart. If one has naturally any gross defects in his voice or gestures, he begins at the wrong end, if he attempts at reforming them only when he is to speak in public. He should begin with rectifying them in his private manner of speaking; and then carry to the public the right habit he has formed. For, when a speaker is engaged in a public discourse, he should not be then employing his attention about his manner, or thinking of his tones and his gestures. If he be so employed, study and affectation will appear. He ought to be then quite in earnest; wholly occupied with his subject and his sentiments; leaving nature, and previously formed habits, to prompt and suggest his manner of delivery.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXIV.

MEANS OF IMPROVING IN ELOQUENCE.

I HAVE now treated fully of the different kinds of public ſpeaking, of the compoſition, and of the delivery of a diſcourſe. Before finiſhing this ſubject, it may be of uſe, that I ſuggeſt ſome things concerning the propereſt means of improvement in the art of public ſpeaking, and the moſt neceſſary ſtudies for that purpoſe.

To be an eloquent ſpeaker, in the proper ſenſe of the word, is far from being either a common or an eaſy attainment. Indeed, to compoſe a florid harangue on ſome popular topic, and to deliver it ſo as to amuſe an audience, is a matter not very difficult. But though ſome praiſe be due to this, yet the idea, which I have endeavoured to give of Eloquence, is much higher. It is a great exertion of the human powers. It is the art of being perſuaſive and commanding; the art, not of pleaſing the fancy merely, but of ſpeaking both to the underſtanding, and to the heart; of intereſting the hearers in ſuch a degree, as to ſeize and carry them along with us; and to leave them with a deep and ſtrong impreſſion of what they have heard. How many talents, natural and acquired, muſt concur for carrying this to perfection? A ſtrong, lively, and warm imagination; quick ſenſibility of heart, joined with ſolid judgment, good ſenſe, and preſence of mind: all improved by great and long attention to ſtyle and compoſition; and ſupported alſo by the exterior, yet important qualifications of a graceful manner, a preſence not ungainly, and a full and tunable voice. How little reaſon to wonder, that a perfect and accompliſhed orator, ſhould be one of the characters that is moſt rarely to be found?

Let

Let us not despair, however. Between mediocrity and perfection, there is a very wide interval. There are many intermediate spaces, which may be filled up with honour; and the more rare and difficult that complete perfection is, the greater is the honour of approaching to it, though we do not fully attain it. The number of orators who stand in the highest class is, perhaps, smaller than the number of poets who are foremost in poetic fame; but the study of oratory has this advantage above that of poetry, that, in poetry, one must be an eminently good performer, or he is not supportable:

————Mediocribus esse poetis
Non Di, non homines, non concessêre columnæ.*

In eloquence this does not hold. There, one may possess a moderate station with dignity. Eloquence admits of a great many different forms; plain and simple, as well as high and pathetic; and a genius that cannot reach the latter, may shine with much reputation and usefulness in the former.

Whether nature or art contribute most to form an orator, is a trifling inquiry. In all attainments whatever, nature must be the prime agent. She must bestow the original talents. She must sow the seeds; but culture is requisite for bringing those seeds to perfection. Nature must always have done somewhat; but a great deal will always be left to be done by art. This is certain, that study and discipline are more necessary for the improvement of natural genius, in oratory, than they are in poetry. What I mean is, that though poetry be capable of receiving assistance from critical art, yet a poet, without any aid from art, by the force of genius alone, can rise higher than a public speaker can do, who has never given attention to the rules of style, composition, and delivery. Homer formed himself; Demosthenes and Cicero were formed by the help of much labour, and of many assistances derived from the labour of others. After these preliminary observations, let us proceed to the main design of this Lecture; to consider of the means to be used for improving in eloquence.

In the first place, what stands highest in the order of means, is personal character and disposition. In order to be a truly eloquent

* For God and man, and letter'd post denies,
That poets ever are of middling size. FRANCIS.

loquent or persuasive speaker, nothing is more necessary than to be a virtuous man. This was a favourite position among the ancient rhetoricans: "Non posse Oratorem esse nisi virum bonum." To find any such connexion between virtue and one of the highest liberal arts, must give pleasure; and it can, I think, be clearly shown, that this is not a mere topic of declamation, but that the connexion here alleged, is undoubtedly founded in truth and reason.

For, consider first, Whether any thing be more essential to persuasion, than the opinion which we entertain of the probity, disinterestedness, candour, and other good moral qualities of the person who endeavours to persuade? These give weight and force to every thing which he utters; nay, they add a beauty to it; they dispose us to listen with attention and pleasure; and create a secret partiality in favour of that side which he espouses. Whereas, if we entertain a suspicion of craft and disingenuity, of a corrupt, or a base mind, in the speaker, his eloquence loses all its real effect. It may entertain and amuse; but it is viewed as artifice, as trick, as the play only of speech; and, viewed in this light, whom can it persuade? We can even read a book with more pleasure, when we think favourably of its author; but when we have the living speaker before our eyes, addressing us personally on some subject of importance, the opinion we entertain of his character must have a much more powerful effect.

But, lest it should be said, that this relates only to the character of virtue, which one may maintain, without being at bottom a truly worthy man, I must observe farther, that besides the weight which it adds to character, real virtue operates also, in other ways, to the advantage of eloquence.

First, Nothing is so favourable as virtue to the prosecution of honourable studies. It prompts a generous emulation to excel; it inures to industry; it leaves the mind vacant and free, master of itself, disencumbered of those bad passions, and disengaged from those mean pursuits, which have ever been found the greatest enemies to true proficiency. Quintilian has touched this consideration very properly: "Quod si "agrorum nimia cura et solicitior rei familiaris diligentia, et "venandi voluptas, & dati spectaculis dies, multum studiis

" auferunt, quid putamus facturas cupiditatem, avaritiam, in" vidiam? Nihil enim est tam occupatum, tam multiforme, tot " ac tam variis affectibus concisum, atque laceratum, quam " mala ac improba mens. Quis inter hæc, literis, aut ulli " bonæ arti, locus? Non hercle magis quam frugibus, in terra " sentibus ac rubis occupata."*

But, besides this consideration, there is another of still higher inportance, though I am not sure of its being attended to as much as it deserves; namely, that from the fountain of real and genuine virtue, are drawn those sentiments which will ever be most powerful in affecting the hearts of others. Bad as the world is, nothing has so great and universal a command over the minds of men as virtue. No kind of language is so generally understood, and so powerfully felt, as the native language of worthy and virtuous feelings. He only, therefore, who possesses these full and strong, can speak properly, and in its own language, to the heart. On all great subjects and occasions, there is a dignity, there is an energy in noble sentiments, which is overcoming and irresistible. They give an ardour and a flame to one's discourse, which seldom fails to kindle a like flame in those who hear; and which, more than any other cause, bestows on eloquence that power, for which it is famed, of seizing and transporting an audience. Here, art and imitation will never avail. An assumed character conveys nothing of this powerful warmth. It is only a native and unaffected glow of feeling, which can transmit the emotion to others. Hence, the most renowned orators, such as Cicero and Demosthenes, were no less distinguished for some of the high virtues, as public spirit and zeal for their country, than for eloquence. Beyond doubt, to these virtues their eloquence owed much of its effect; and those orations of theirs, in which there breathes most of the virtuous and magnanimous spirit, are those which have most attracted the admiration of ages.

Nothing,

* "If the management of an estate, if anxious attention to domestic economy, " a passion for hunting, or whole days given up to public places and amusements, consume so much time that is due to study, how much greater waste " must be occasioned by licentious desires, avarice or envy? Nothing is so " much hurried and agitated, so contradictory to itself, or so violently torn " and shattered by conflicting passions, as a bad heart. Amidst the distractions which it produces, what room is left for the cultivation of letters, or " the pursuit of any honourable art? No more, assuredly, than there is for " the growth of corn in a field that is overrun with thorns and brambles."

Nothing, therefore, is more neceſſary for thoſe who would excel in any of the higher kinds of oratory, than to cultivate habits of the ſeveral virtues, and to refine and improve all their moral feelings. Whenever theſe become dead, or callous, they may be aſſured, that, on every great occaſion, they will ſpeak with leſs power, and leſs ſucceſs. The ſentiments and diſpoſitions, particularly requiſite for them to cultivate, are the following: The love of juſtice and order, and indignation at inſolence and oppreſſion; the love of honeſty and truth, and deteſtation of fraud, meanneſs, and corruption; magnanimity of ſpirit; the love of liberty, of their country and the public; zeal for all great and noble deſigns, and reverence for all worthy and heroic characters. A cold and ſceptical turn of mind is extremely adverſe to eloquence; and no leſs ſo, is that cavilling diſpoſition which takes pleaſure in depreciating what is great, and ridiculing what is generally admired. Such a diſpoſition beſpeaks one not very likely to excel in any thing; but leaſt of all in oratory. A true orator ſhould be a perſon of generous ſentiments, of warm feelings, and of a mind turned towards the admiration of all thoſe great and high objects, which mankind are naturally formed to admire. Joined with the manly virtues, he ſhould, at the ſame time, poſſeſs ſtrong and tender ſenſibility to all the injuries, diſtreſſes, and ſorrows of his fellow-creatures; a heart that can eaſily relent; that can readily enter into the circumſtances of others, and can make their caſe his own. A proper mixture of courage, and of modeſty, muſt alſo be ſtudied by every public ſpeaker. Modeſty is eſſential; it is always, and juſtly, ſuppoſed to be a concomitant of merit; and every appearance of it is winning and prepoſſeſſing. But modeſty ought not to run into exceſſive timidity. Every public ſpeaker ſhould be able to reſt ſomewhat on himſelf; and to aſſume that air, not of ſelf-complacency, but of firmneſs, which beſpeaks a conſciouſneſs of his being thoroughly perſuaded of the truth, or juſtice, of what he delivers; a circumſtance of no ſmall conſequence for making impreſſion on thoſe who hear.

Next to moral qualifications, what, in the ſecond place, is moſt neceſſary to an orator, is a fund of knowledge. Much is this inculcated by Cicero and Quintilian: "Quod omnibus diſ-"ciplinis et artibus debet eſſe inſtructus Orator." By which

they mean, that he ought to have what we call, a liberal education; and to be formed by a regular study of philosophy, and the polite arts. We must never forget that,

Scribendi recte, sapere est & principium & fons.

Good sense and knowledge, are the foundation of all good speaking. There is no art that can teach one to be eloquent, in any sphere, without a sufficient acquaintance with what belongs to that sphere; or if there were an art that made such pretensions, it would be mere quackery, like the pretensions of the sophists of old, to teach their disciples to speak for and against every subject; and would be deservedly exploded by all wise men. Attention to style, to composition, and all the arts of speech, can only assist an orator in setting off, to advantage, the stock of materials which he possesses; but the stock, the materials themselves, must be brought from other quarters than from rhetoric. He who is to plead at the bar, must make himself thoroughly master of the knowledge of the law; and of the learning and experience that can be useful in his profession, for supporting a cause, or convincing a Judge. He who is to speak from the pulpit, must apply himself closely to the study of divinity, of practical religion, of morals, of human nature; that he may be rich in all the topics, both of instruction and persuasion. He who would fit himself for being a member of the supreme council of the nation, or of any public assembly, must be thoroughly acquainted with the business that belongs to such assembly; he must study the forms of court, the course of procedure; and must attend minutely to all the facts that may be the subjects of question or deliberation.

Besides the knowledge that properly belongs to that profession to which he addicts himself, a public speaker, if ever he expects to be eminent, must make himself acquainted, as far as his necessary occupations allow, with the general circle of polite literature. The study of poetry may be useful to him, on many occasions, for embellishing his style, for suggesting lively images, or agreeable allusions. The study of history may be still more useful to him; as the knowledge of facts, of eminent characters, and of the course of human affairs, finds place on

many

many occaſions.* There are few great occaſions of public ſpeaking, in which one will not derive aſſiſtance from cultivating taſte, and extenſive knowledge. They will often yield him materials for proper ornament; ſometimes, for argument and real uſe. A deficiency of knowledge, even in ſubjects that belong not directly to his own profeſſion, will expoſe to many diſadvantages, and give better qualified rivals a great ſuperiority over him.

Allow me to recommend, in the third place, not only the attainment of uſeful knowledge, but a habit of application and induſtry. Without this, it is impoſſible to excel in any thing. We muſt not imagine, that it is by a ſort of muſhroom growth, that one can riſe to be a diſtinguiſhed pleader, or preacher, or ſpeaker in any aſſembly. It is not by ſtarts of application, or by a few years' preparation of ſtudy afterwards diſcontinued, that eminence can be attained. No; it can be attained only by means of regular induſtry, grown up into a habit, and ready to be exerted on every occaſion that calls for induſtry. This is the fixed law of our nature; and he muſt have a very high opinion of his own genius indeed, that can believe himſelf an exception to it. A very wiſe law of our nature it is; for induſtry is, in truth, the great "condimentum," the ſeaſoning of every pleaſure; without which life is doomed to languiſh. Nothing is ſo great an enemy both to honourable attainments, and to the real, to the briſk, and ſpirited enjoyment of life, as that relaxed ſtate of mind which ariſes from indolence and diſſipation. One that is deſtined to excel in any art, eſpecially in the arts of ſpeaking and writing, will be known by this more than by any other mark whatever, an enthuſiaſm for that art; an enthuſiaſm, which, firing his mind with the object he has in view, will diſpoſe him to reliſh every labour which the means require. It was this, that characteriſed the great men of antiquity; it is this, which muſt diſtinguiſh the moderns who would tread in their ſteps. This honourable enthuſiaſm, it is highly neceſſary for ſuch as are ſtudying oratory to cultivate. If youth wants it, manhood will flag miſerably.

In

* "Imprimis veró, abundare debet orator exemplorum copia, cum veterum, "tum etiam novorum; adeo ut non modo quæ conſcripta ſunt hiſtoriis, aut "Sermonibus velut per manus tradita, quæque quotidie agunter, debeat nôſſe; "verùm ne ea quidem quæ a clarioribus poëtis ſunt ficta negligere."
Quint. L. xii. Cap. 4.

In the fourth place, attention to the beſt models will contribute greatly towards improvement. Every one who ſpeaks, or writes, ſhould, indeed, endeavour to have ſomewhat that is his own, that is peculiar to himſelf, and that charactiſes his compoſition and ſtyle. Slaviſh imitation depreſſes genius, or rather betrays the want of it. But withal, there is no genius ſo original, but may be profited and aſſiſted by the aid of proper examples, in ſtyle, compoſition, and delivery. They always open ſome new ideas; they ſerve to enlarge and correct our own. They quicken the current of thought, and excite emulation.

Much, indeed, will depend upon the right choice of models which we purpoſe to imitate; and ſuppoſing them rightly choſen, a farther care is requiſite, of not being ſeduced by a blind univerſal admiration. For, "decipit exemplar, vitiis imitabile." Even in the moſt finiſhed models we can ſelect, it muſt not be forgotten, that there are always ſome things improper for imitation. We ſhould ſtudy to acquire a juſt conception of the peculiar characteriſtic beauties of any writer, or public ſpeaker, and imitate theſe only. One ought never to attach himſelf too cloſely to any ſingle model; for he who does ſo, is almoſt ſure of being ſeduced into a faulty and affected imitation. His buſineſs ſhould be, to draw from ſeveral the proper ideas of perfection. Living examples of public ſpeaking, in any kind, it will not be expected that I ſhould here point out. As to the writers ancient and modern, from whom benefit may be derived in forming compoſition and ſtyle, I have ſpoken ſo much of them in former Lectures, that it is needleſs to repeat what I have ſaid of their virtues and defects. I own, it is to be regretted, that the Engliſh language, in which there is much good writing, furniſhes us, however, with but very few recorded examples of eloquent public ſpeaking. Among the French there are more. Saurin, Bourdaloue, Flechier, Maſſillon, particularly the laſt, are eminent for the eloquence of the pulpit. But the moſt nervous and ſublime of all their orators is Boſſuet, the famous biſhop of Meaux; in whoſe *Oraiſons Funebres*, there is a very high ſpirit of oratory.* Some of Fontenelle's

Harangues

* The criticiſm which Mr. Crevier, Author of Rhetoric Françoiſe, paſſes upon theſe writers whom I have named, is: "Boſſuet eſt grand, mais inégal; "Flechier eſt plus égal, mais moins élevé, ſouvent trop ſleur: Bourdalour eſt "ſolide & judicieux, mais il neglige les graces legères: Maſſillon eſt plus riche "en images, mais moins foit eu raiſonnement. Je ſouhaite donc, que l'orateur "ne ſe contente dans l'imitation d'un ſeul de ces, modeles, mais qu'il tache de "réunir en lui toutes leurs différentes vertus." Vol. II. chap. dèrnier.

Harangues to the French Academy, are elegant and agreeable. And at the bar, the printed pleadings of Cochin and D'Agueſſeau, are highly extolled by the late French critics.

There is one obſervation which it is of importance to make, concerning imitation of the ſtyle of any favourite author, when we would carry his ſtyle into public ſpeaking. We muſt attend to a very material diſtinction, between written and ſpoken language. There are, in truth, two different manners of communicating ideas. A book that is to be read, requires one ſort of ſtyle; a man that is to ſpeak, muſt uſe another. In books, we look for correctneſs, preciſion, all redundancy pruned, all repetitions avoided, language completely poliſhed. Speaking admits a more eaſy copious ſtyle, and leſs fettered by rule; repetitions may often be neceſſary, parentheſes may ſometimes be graceful, the ſame thought muſt often be placed in different views; as the hearers can catch it only from the mouth of the ſpeaker, and have not the advantage, as in reading a book, of turning back again, and of dwelling on what they do not fully comprehend. Hence the ſtyle of many good authors, would appear ſtiff, affected, and even obſcure, if, by too cloſe an imitation, we ſhould transfer it to popular oration. How awkward, for example, would Lord Shafteſbury's ſentences found in the mouth of a public ſpeaker? Some kinds of public diſcourſe, it is true, ſuch as that of the pulpit, where more exact preparation, and more ſtudied ſtyle are admitted, would bear ſuch a manner better than others, which are expected to approach more to extemporaneous ſpeaking. But ſtill there is, in general, ſo much difference between ſpeaking, and compoſition deſigned only to be read, as ſhould guard us againſt a cloſe and injudicious imitation.

Some authors there are, whoſe manner of writing approaches nearer to the ſtyle of ſpeaking than others; and who, therefore, can be imitated with more ſafety. In this claſs, among the Engliſh authors, are Dean Swift, and Lord Bolingbroke. The Dean, throughout all his writings, in the midſt of much correctneſs, maintains the eaſy natural manner of an unaffected ſpeaker; and this is one of his chief excellencies. Lord Bolingbroke's ſtyle is more ſplendid, and more declamatory than Dean Swift's; but ſtill it is the ſtyle of one who ſpeaks, or rath-

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er who harangues. Indeed, all his political writings (for it is to them only, and not to his philosophical ones, that this observation can be applied) carry much more the appearance of one declaiming with warmth in a great assembly, than of one writing in a closet, in order to be read by others. They have all the copiousness, the fervour, the inculcating method that is allowable, and graceful in an orator; perhaps too much of it for a writer: and it is to be regretted, as I have formerly observed, that the matter contained in them, should have been so trivial or so false; for, from the manner and style, considerable advantage might be reaped.

In the fifth place, besides attention to the best models, frequent exercise both in composing and speaking, will be admitted to be a necessary mean of improvement. That sort of composition is, doubtless, most useful, which relates to the profession, or kind of public speaking, to which persons addict themselves. This, they should keep ever in their eye, and be gradually inuring themselves to it. But let me also advise them, not to allow themselves negligent composition of any kind. He who has it for his aim to write or to speak correctly, should, in the most trivial kind of composition, in writing a letter, nay, even in common discourse, study to acquit himself with propriety. I do not at all mean, that he is never to write, or to speak a word, but in elaborate and artificial language. This would form him to a stiffness and affectation, worse, by ten thousand degrees, than the greatest negligence. But it is to be observed, that there is, in every thing, a manner which is becoming, and has propriety; and opposite to it, there is a clumsy and faulty performance of the same thing. The becoming manner is very often the most light, and seemingly careless manner; but it requires taste and attention to seize the just idea of it. That idea, when acquired, we should keep in our eye, and form upon it whatever we write or say.

Exercises of speaking have always been recommended to students, in order that they may prepare themselves for speaking in public, and on real business. The meetings, or societies, into which they sometimes form themselves for this purpose, are laudable institutions; and, under proper conduct, may serve many valuable purposes. They are favourable to

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knowledge and ſtudy, by giving occaſion to inquiries, concerning thoſe ſubjects which are made the ground of diſcuſſion. They produce emulation; and gradually inure thoſe who are concerned in them, to ſomewhat that reſembles a public aſſembly. They accuſtom them to know their own powers, and to acquire a command of themſelves in ſpeaking; and what is, perhaps, the greateſt advantage of all, they give them a facility and fluency of expreſſion, and aſſiſt them in procuring that "Copia verborum," which can be acquired by no other means but frequent exerciſe in ſpeaking.

But the meetings which I have now in my eye, are to be underſtood of thoſe academical aſſociations, where a moderate number of young gentlemen, who are carrying on their ſtudies, and are connected by ſome affinity in the future purſuits which they have in view, aſſemble privately, in order to improve one another, and to prepare themſelves for thoſe public exhibitions which may afterwards fall to their lot. As for thoſe public and promiſcuous ſocieties, in which multitudes are brought together, who are often of low ſtations and occupations, who are joined by no common bond of union, except an abſurd rage for public ſpeaking, and have no other object in view, but to make a ſhow of their ſuppoſed talents, they are inſtitutions not merely of an uſeleſs, but of an hurtful nature. They are in great hazard of proving ſeminaries of licentiouſneſs, petulance, faction and folly. They miſlead thoſe who, in their own callings, might be uſeful members of ſociety, into fantaſtic plans of making a figure on ſubjects, which divert their attention from their proper buſineſs, and are widely remote from their ſphere in life.

Even the allowable meetings into which ſtudents of oratory form themſelves ſtand in need of direction, in order to render them uſeful. If their ſubjects of diſcourſe be improperly choſen; if they maintain extravagant or indecent topics; if they indulge themſelves in looſe and flimſy declamation, which has no foundation in good ſenſe; or accuſtom themſelves to ſpeak pertly on all ſubjects without due preparation, they may improve one another in petulance, but in no other thing; and will infallibly form themſelves to a very faulty and vicious taſte in ſpeaking. I would, therefore, adviſe all who are members of

such societies, in the first place, to attend to the choice of their subjects; that they be useful and manly, either formed on the course of their studies, or on something that has relation to morals and taste, to action and life. In the second place, I would advise them to be temperate in the practice of speaking; not to speak too often, nor on subjects where they are ignorant or unripe; but only, when they have proper materials for a discourse, and have digested and thought of the subject beforehand. In the third place, when they do speak, they should study always to keep good sense and persuasion in view, rather than an ostentation of eloquence; and for this end I would, in the fourth place, repeat the advice which I gave in a former Lecture, that they should always choose that side of the question to which, in their own judgment, they are most inclined, as the right and true side; and defend it by such arguments as seem to them most solid. By these means, they will take the best method of forming themselves gradually to a manly, correct, and persuasive manner of speaking.

It now only remains to inquire, of what use may the study of critical and rhetorical writers be for improving one in the practice of eloquence? These are certainly not to be neglected; and yet I dare not say that much is to be expected from them. For professed writers on public speaking, we must look chiefly among the ancients. In modern times, for reasons which were before given, popular eloquence, as an art, has never been very much the object of study; it has not the same powerful effects now that it had in more democratical states; and therefore has not been cultivated with the same care. Among the moderns, though there has been a great deal of good criticism on the different kinds of writing, yet much has not been attempted on the subject of eloquence, or public discourse; and what has been given us of that kind, has been drawn mostly from the ancients. Such a writer as Joannes Gerardus Vossius, who has gathered into one heap of ponderous lumber, all the trifling, as well as the useful things, tha are to be found in the Greek and Roman writers, is enough t disgust one with the study of eloquence. Among the Frenc there has been more attempted, on this subject, than among the English. The Bishop of Cambray's writings on eloquence,

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I before mentioned with honour. Rollin, Batteux; Crevier, Gibert, and ſeveral other French critics, have alſo written on oratory; but though ſome of them may be uſeful, none of them are ſo conſiderable as to deſerve particular recommendation.

It is to the original ancient writers that we muſt chiefly have recourſe; and it is a reproach to any one, whoſe profeſſion calls him to ſpeak in public, to be unacquainted with them. In all the ancient rhetorical writers, there is, indeed, this defect, that they are too ſyſtematical, as I formerly ſhowed; they aim at doing too much; at reducing rhetoric to a complete and perfect art, which may even ſupply invention with materials on every ſubject; inſomuch, that one would imagine they expected to form an orator by rule, in as mechanical a manner as one would form a carpenter. Whereas, all that can, in truth, be done, is to give openings for aſſiſting and enlightening taſte, and for pointing out to genius the courſe it ought to hold.

Ariſtotle laid the foundation for all that was afterwards written on the ſubject. That amazing and comprehenſive genius, which does honour to human nature, and which gave light into ſo many different ſciences, has inveſtigated the principles of rhetoric with great penetration. Ariſtotle appears to have been the firſt who took rhetoric out of the hands of the ſophiſts, and introduced reaſoning and good ſenſe into the art. Some of the profoundeſt things which have been written on the paſſions and manners of men, are to be found in his Treatiſe on Rhetoric; though in this, as in all his writings, his great brevity often renders him obſcure. Succeeding Greek rhetoricians, moſt of whom are now loſt, improved on the foundation which Ariſtotle had laid. Two of them ſtill remain, Demetrius Phalereus, and Dionyſius of Halicarnaſſus; both write on the conſtruction of ſentences, and deſerve to be peruſed; eſpecially Dionyſius, who is a very accurate and judicious critic.

I need ſcarcely recommend the rhetorical writings of Cicero. [illegible]ever, on the ſubject of eloquence, comes from ſo great [illegible]ator, muſt be worthy of attention. His moſt conſiderable [illegible] on this ſubject is that *De Oratore*, in three books. None [illegible]ero's writings are more highly finiſhed than this treatiſe.

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The dialogue is polite; the characters are well supported, and the conduct of the whole is beautiful and agreeable. It is, indeed, full of digressions, and his rules and observations may be thought sometimes too vague and general. Useful things, however, may be learned from it; and it is no small benefit to be made acquainted with Cicero's own idea of eloquence. The "Orator ad M. Brutum," is also a considerable treatise; and, in general, throughout all Cicero's rhetorical works there run those high and sublime ideas of eloquence, which are fitted both for forming a just taste, and for creating that enthusiasm for the art, which is of the greatest consequence for excelling in it.

But of all the ancient writers on the subject of oratory, the most instructive, and most useful, is Quintilian. I know few books which abound more with good sense, and discover a greater degree of just and accurate taste, than Quintilian's Institutions. Almost all the principles of good criticism are to be found in them. He has digested into excellent order all the ancient ideas concerning rhetoric, and is, at the same time, himself an eloquent writer. Though some parts of his work contain too much of the technical and artificial system then in vogue, and for that reason may be thought dry and tedious, yet I would not advise the omitting to read any part of his institutions. To pleaders at the bar, even these technical parts may prove of much use. Seldom has any person, of more sound and distinct judgment than Quintilian, applied himself to the study of the art of oratory.

LECTURE XXXV.

COMPARATIVE MERIT OF THE ANCIENTS AND THE MODERNS. HISTORICAL WRITING.

I HAVE now finiſhed that part of the courſe which reſpected oratory, or public ſpeaking, and which, as far as the ſubject allowed, I have endeavoured to form into ſome ſort of ſyſtem. It remains, that I enter on the conſideration of the moſt diſtinguiſhed kinds of compoſition both in proſe and verſe, and point out the principles of criticiſm relating to them. This part of the work might eaſily be drawn out to a great length; but I am ſenſible, that critical diſcuſſions, when they are purſued too far, become both trifling and tedious. I ſhall ſtudy, therefore, to avoid unneceſſary prolixity; and hope at the ſame time, to omit nothing that is very material under the ſeveral heads.

I ſhall follow the ſame method here which I have all along purſued, and without which, theſe Lectures could not be entitled to any attention; that is, I ſhall freely deliver my own opinion on every ſubject; regarding authority no farther, than as it appears to me founded on good ſenſe and reaſon. In former Lectures, as I have often quoted ſeveral of the ancient claſſics for their beauties, ſo I have alſo, ſometimes, pointed out their defects. Hereafter, I ſhall have occaſion to do the ſame, when treating of their writings under more general heads. It may be fit, therefore, that, before proceeding farther, I make ſome obſervations on the comparative merit of the ancients and the moderns: in order that we may be able to aſcertain rationally, upon what foundation that deference reſts, which has ſo generally been paid to the ancients. Theſe obſervations are the more neceſſary, as this ſubject has given riſe to no ſmall controverſy

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troverſy in the republic of letters; and they may, with propriety, be made now, as they will ſerve to throw light on ſome things I have afterwards to deliver, concerning different kinds of compoſition.

It is a remarkable phenomenon, and one which has often employed the ſpeculations of curious men, that writers and artiſts, moſt diſtinguiſhed for their parts and genius, have generally appeared in conſiderable numbers at a time. Some ages have been remarkably barren in them; while, at other periods, nature ſeems to have exerted herſelf with a more than ordinary effort, and to have poured them forth with a profuſe fertility. Various reaſons have been aſſigned for this. Some of the moral cauſes lie obvious; ſuch as favourable circumſtances of government and of manners; encouragement from great men; emulation excited among the men of genius. But as theſe have been thought inadequate to the whole effect, phyſical cauſes have been alſo aſſigned; and the Abbé du Bos, in his reflections on poetry and painting, has collected a great many obſervations on the influence which the air, the climate, and other ſuch natural cauſes, may be ſuppoſed to have upon genius. But whatever the cauſes be, the fact is certain, that there have been certain periods or ages of the world much more diſtinguiſhed than others, for the extraordinary productions of genius.

Learned men have marked out four of theſe happy ages. The firſt is the Grecian age, which commenced near the time of the Peloponneſian war, and extended till the time of Alexander the Great; within which period, we have Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Socrates, Plato, Ariſtotle, Demoſthenes, Æſchines, Lyſias, Iſocrates, Pindar, Æſchylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Ariſtophanes, Menander, Anacreon, Theocritus, Lyſippus, Apelles, Phidias, Praxiteles. The ſecond, is the Roman age, included nearly within the days of Julius Cæſar and Auguſtus; affording us Catullus, Lucretius, Terence, Virgil, Horace, Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid, Phædrus, Cæſar, Cicero, Livy, Salluſt, Varro, and Vitruvius. The third age is, that of the reſtoration of learning, under the Popes Julius II. and Leo X.; when flouriſhed Arioſto, Taſſo, Sannazarius, Vida, Machiavel, Guicciardini, Davila, Eraſmus, Paul Jovius, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Titian. The fourth, comprehends the

the age of Louis the XIV. and Queen Anne, when flouriſhed in France, Corneille, Racine, De Retz, Moliere, Boileau, Fontaine, Baptiſte Rouſſeau, Boſſuet, Fenelon, Bourdaloue, Paſcal, Malebranche, Maſſillon, Bruyere, Bayle, Fontenelle, Vertot; and in England, Dryden, Pope, Addiſon, Prior, Swift, Parnell, Arbuthnot, Congreve, Otway, Young, Rowe, Atterbury, Shafteſbury, Bolingbroke, Tillotſon, Temple, Boyle, Locke, Newton, Clark.

When we ſpeak comparatively of the ancients and the moderns, we generally mean by the ancients, ſuch as lived in the two firſt of theſe periods, including alſo one or two who lived more early, as Homer in particular; and by the moderns, thoſe who flouriſhed in the two laſt of theſe ages, including alſo the eminent writers down to our own times. Any compariſon between theſe two claſſes of writers, cannot be other than vague and looſe, as they comprehend ſo many, and of ſuch different kinds and degrees of genius. But the compariſon is generally made to turn by thoſe who are fond of making it, upon two or three of the moſt diſtinguiſhed in each claſs. With much heat it was agitated in France, between Boileau and Mad. Dacier, on the one hand for the ancients, and Perrault and La Motte, on the other, for the moderns; and it was carried to extremes on both ſides. To this day, among men of taſte and letters, we find a leaning to one or other ſide. A few reflections may throw light upon the ſubject, and enable us to diſcern upon what grounds we are to reſt our judgment in this controverſy.

If any one, at this day, in the eighteenth century, take upon him to decry the ancient claſſics; if he pretends to have diſcovered that Homer and Virgil are poets of inconſiderable merit, and that Demoſthenes and Cicero are not great orators, we may boldly venture to tell ſuch a man, that he is come too late with his diſcovery. The reputation of ſuch writers is eſtabliſhed upon a foundation too ſolid, to be now ſhaken by any arguments whatever; for it is eſtabliſhed upon that almoſt univerſal taſte of mankind, proved and tried throughout the ſucceſſion of ſo many ages. Imperfections in their works he may indeed point out; paſſages that are faulty he may ſhew; for where is the human work that is perfect? But, if he attempts to diſcredit their works in general, or to prove

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that the reputation which they have gained is, on the whole, unjuſt, there is an argument againſt him, which is equal to full demonſtration. He muſt be in the wrong; for human nature is againſt him. In matters of taſte, ſuch as poetry and oratory, to whom does the appeal lie? where is the ſtandard? and where the authority of the laſt deciſion? where is it to be looked for, but, as I formerly ſhewed, in thoſe feelings and ſentiments that are found, on the moſt extenſive examination, to be the common ſentiments and feelings of men? Theſe have been fully conſulted on this head. The public, the unprejudiced public, has been tried and appealed to for many centuries, and throughout almoſt all civilized nations. It has pronounced its verdict; it has given its ſanction to thoſe writers; and from this tribunal there lies no farther appeal.

In matters of mere reaſoning, the world may be long in an error; and may be convinced of the error by ſtronger reaſonings, when produced. Poſitions that depend upon ſcience, upon knowledge, and matters of fact, may be overturned according as ſcience and knowledge are enlarged, and new matters of fact are brought to light. For this reaſon, a ſyſtem of philoſophy receives no ſufficient ſanction from its antiquity, or long currency. The world, as it grows older, may be juſtly expected to become, if not wiſer, at leaſt more knowing; and ſuppoſing it doubtful whether Ariſtotle, or Newton, were the greater genius, yet Newton's philoſophy may prevail over Ariſtotle's by means of later diſcoveries, to which Ariſtotle was a ſtranger. But nothing of this kind holds as to matters of taſte; which depend not on the progreſs of knowledge and ſcience, but upon ſentiment and feeling. It is in vain to think of undeceiving mankind, with reſpect to errors committed here, as in philoſophy. For the univerſal feeling of mankind is the natural feeling; and becauſe it is the natural, it is, for that reaſon, the right feeling. The reputation of the Iliad and the Æneid muſt therefore ſtand upon ſure ground, becauſe it has ſtood ſo long; though that of the Ariſtotelian or Platonic philoſophy, every one is at liberty to call in queſtion.

It is in vain alſo to allege, that the reputation of the ancient poets, and orators, is owing to authority, to pedantry, and to the prejudices of education, tranſmitted from age to age

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These, it is true, are the authors put into our hands at schools and colleges, and by that means we have now an early prepossession in their favour; but how came they to gain the possession of colleges and schools? Plainly, by the high fame which these authors had among their own cotemporaries. For the Greek and Latin were not always dead languages. There was a time when Homer, and Virgil, and Horace, were viewed in the same light as we now view Dryden, Pope, and Addison. It is not to commentators and universities, that the classics are indebted for their fame. They became classics and schoolbooks, in consequence of the high admiration which was paid them by the best judges in their own country and nation. As early as the days of Juvenal, who wrote under the reign of Domitian, we find Virgil and Horace become the standard books in the education of youth.

> Quot stabant pueri, cum totus decolor esset
> Flaccus, & hæreret nigro fuligo Maroni. SAT. 7.*

From this general principle, then, of the reputation of great ancient classics being so early, so lasting, so universal, among all the most polished nations, we may justly and boldly infer that their reputation cannot be wholly unjust, but must have a solid foundation in the merit of their writings.

Let us guard, however, against a blind and implicit veneration for the ancients in every thing. I have opened the general principle, which must go far in instituting a fair comparison between them and the moderns. Whatever superiority the ancients may have had in point of genius, yet in all arts, where the natural progress of knowledge has had room to produce any considerable effects, the moderns cannot but have some advantage. The world may, in certain respects, be considered as a person, who must needs gain somewhat by advancing in years. Its improvements have not, I confess, been always in proportion to the centuries that have passed over it; for, during the course of some ages, it has sunk as into a total lethargy.

* "Then thou art bound to smell, on either hand,
"As many stinking lamps, as schoolboys stand,
"When Horace could not read in his own sully'd book,
"And Virgil's sacred page was all besmear'd with smoke."
DRYDEN.

lethargy. Yet, when roused from that lethargy, it has generally been able to avail itself, more or less, of former discoveries. At intervals, there arose some happy genius, who could both improve on what had gone before, and invent something new. With the advantage of a proper stock of materials, an inferior genius can make greater progress, than a much superior one, to whom these materials are wanting.

Hence, in natural philosophy, astronomy, chymistry, and other sciences that depend on an extensive knowledge and observation of facts, modern philosophers have an unquestionable superiority over the ancient. I am inclined also to think, that in matters of pure reasoning, there is more precision among the moderns, than in some instances there was among the ancients; owing perhaps to a more extensive literary intercourse, which has improved and sharpened the faculties of men. In some studies too, that relate to taste and fine writing, which is our object, the progress of society must, in equity, be admitted to have given us some advantages. For instance, in history; there is certainly more political knowledge in several European nations at present, than there was in ancient Greece and Rome. We are better acquainted with the nature of government, because we have seen it under a greater variety of forms and revolutions. The world is more laid open than it was in former times; commerce is greatly enlarged; more countries are civilized; posts are every where established; intercourse is become more easy; and the knowledge of facts, by consequence, more attainable. All these are great advantages to historians; of which, in some measure, as I shall afterward shew, they have availed themselves. In the more complex kinds of poetry, likewise, we may have gained somewhat, perhaps, in point of regularity and accuracy. In dramatic performances, having the advantage of the ancient models, we may be allowed to have made some improvements, in the variety of the characters, the conduct of the plot, attentions to probability, and to decorums.

These seem to me the chief points of superiority we can plead above the ancients. Neither do they extend as far as might be imagined at first view. For if the strength of genius be on one side, it will go far, in works of taste at least, to counterbalance all the artificial improvements which can be

made

made by greater knowledge and correctness. To return to our comparison of the age of the world with that of a man; it may be said, not altogether without reason, that if the advancing age of the world bring along with it more science and more refinement, there belong, however, to its earlier periods, more vigour, more fire, more enthusiasm of genius. This appears indeed to form the characteristical difference between the ancient poets, orators, and historians, compared with the modern. Among the ancients, we find higher conceptions, greater simplicity, more original fancy. Among the moderns, sometimes more art and correctness, but feebler exertions of genius. But, though this be in general a mark of distinction between the ancients and moderns, yet, like all general observations, it must be understood with some exceptions; for in point of poetical fire and original genius, Milton and Shakespeare are inferior to no poets in any age.

It is proper to observe, that there were some circumstances in ancient times, very favourable to those uncommon efforts of genius which were then exerted. Learning was a much more rare and singular attainment in the earlier ages, than it is at present. It was not to schools and universities that the persons applied, who sought to distinguish themselves. They had not this easy recourse. They travelled for their improvement into distant countries, to Egypt, and to the east. They inquired after all the monuments of learning there. They conversed with priests, philosophers, poets, with all who had acquired any distinguished fame. They returned to their own country full of the discoveries which they had made, and fired by the new and uncommon objects which they had seen. Their knowledge and improvements cost them more labour, raised in them more enthusiasm, were attended with higher rewards and honours, than in modern days. Fewer had the means and opportunities of distinguishing themselves, than now; but such as did distinguish themselves, were sure of acquiring that fame, and even veneration, which is, of all other rewards, the greatest incentive to genius. Herodotus read his history to all Greece assembled at the Olympic games, and was publickly crowned. In the Peloponnesian war, when the Athenian army was defeated in Sicily, and the prisoners were ordered to be

put

put to death, such of them as could repeat any verses of Euripides were saved, from honour to that poet, who was a citizen of Athens. These were testimonies of public regard, far beyond what modern manners confer upon genius.

In our times, good writing is considered as an attainment, neither so difficult, nor so high and meritorious.

Scribimus indocti, doctique, Poëmata passim.*

We write much more supinely, and at our ease, than the ancients. To excel, is become a much less considerable object. Less effort, less exertion is required, because we have many more assistances than they. Printing has rendered all books common, and easy to be had. Education for any of the learned professions can be carried on without much trouble. Hence a mediocrity of genius is spread over all. But to rise beyond that, and to overtop the crowd, is given to few. The multitude of assistances which we have for all kinds of composition, in the opinion of Sir William Temple, a very competent judge, rather depresses, than favours, the exertions of native genius. "It is "very possible," says that ingenious author, in his essay on the ancients and moderns, "that men may lose rather than gain by "these; may lessen the force of their own genius, by forming "it upon that of others; may have less knowledge of their "own, for contenting themselves with that of those before "them. So a man that only translates, shall never be a poet; "so people that trust to others' charity, rather than their own "industry, will be always poor. Who can tell," he adds, "whether learning may not even weaken invention, in a man "that has great advantages from nature? Whether the weight "and number of so many other men's thoughts and notions "may not suppress his own; as heaping on wood sometimes "suppresses a little spark, that would otherwise have grown "into a flame? The strength of mind, as well as of body, "grows more from the warmth of exercise, than of clothes; "nay, too much of this foreign heat, rather makes men faint, "and their constitutions weaker than they would be without "them."

From

* "Now every desp'rate blockhead dares to write;
"Verse is the trade of every living wight." FRANCIS.

From whatever cauſe it happens, ſo it is, that among ſome of the ancient writers, we muſt look for the higheſt models in moſt of the kinds of elegant compoſition. For accurate thinking and enlarged ideas, in ſeveral parts of philoſophy, to the moderns we ought chiefly to have recourſe. Of correct and finiſhed writing in ſome works of taſte, they may afford uſeful patterns; but for all that belongs to original genius, to ſpirited, maſterly, and high execution, our beſt and moſt happy ideas are, generally ſpeaking, drawn from the ancients. In epic poetry, for inſtance, Homer and Virgil, to this day, ſtand not within many degrees of any rival. Orators, ſuch as Cicero and Demoſthenes, we have none. In hiſtory, notwithſtanding ſome defects, which I am afterwards to mention in the ancient hiſtorical plans, it may be ſafely aſſerted, that we have no ſuch hiſtorical narration, ſo elegant, ſo pictureſque, ſo animated, and intereſting as that of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Tacitus, and Salluſt. Although the conduct of the drama may be admitted to have received ſome improvements, yet for poetry and ſentiment we have nothing to equal Sophocles and Euripides; nor any dialogue in comedy, that comes up to the correct, graceful, and elegant ſimplicity of Terence. We have no ſuch love elegies as thoſe of Tibullus; no ſuch paſtorals as ſome of Theocritus's: and for lyric poetry, Horace ſtands quite unrivalled. The name of Horace cannot be mentioned without a particular encomium. That "Curioſa Felicitas," which Petronius has remarked in his expreſſion; the ſweetneſs, elegance, and ſpirit of many of his odes, the thorough knowledge of the world, the excellent ſentiments, and natural eaſy manner which diſtinguiſh his ſatires and epiſtles, all contribute to render him one of thoſe very few authors whom one never tires of reading; and from whom alone, were every other monument deſtroyed, we ſhould be led to form a every high idea of the taſte and genius of the Auguſtan age.

To all ſuch then, as wiſh to form their taſte, and nouriſh their genius, let me warmly recommend the aſſiduous ſtudy of the ancient claſſics, both Greek and Roman.

Nocturnâ verſate manu, verſate diurnâ.*

Without

them by day, and ſtudy them by night." FRANCIS.

Without a considerable acquaintance with them, no man can be reckoned a polite scholar; and he will want many assistances for writing and speaking well, which the knowledge of such authors would afford him. Any one has great reason to suspect his own taste, who receives little or no pleasure from the perusal of writings, which so many ages and nations have consented in holding up as objects of admiration. And I am persuaded, it will be found, that in proportion as the ancients are generally studied and admired, or are unknown and disregarded in any country, good taste and good composition will flourish, or decline. They are commonly none but the ignorant or superficial, who undervalue them.

At the same time, a just and high regard for the prime writers of antiquity is to be always distinguished, from that contempt of every thing that is modern, and that blind veneration for all that has been written in Greek or Latin, which belongs only to pedants. Among the Greek and Roman authors, some assuredly deserve much higher regard than others; nay, some are of no great value. Even the best of them lie open occasionally to just censure; for to no human performance it is given, to be absolutely perfect. We may, we ought therefore to read them with a distinguishing eye, so as to propose for imitation their beauties only; and it is perfectly consistent with just and candid criticism, to find fault with parts, while, at the same time, it admires the whole.

After these reflections on the ancients and moderns, I proceed to a critical examination of the most distinguished kinds of composition, and the characters of those writers who have excelled in them, whether modern or ancient.

The most general division of the different kinds of composition is, into those written in prose, and those written in verse; which certainly require to be separately considered, because subject to separate laws. I begin, as is most natural, with writings in prose. Of orations, or public discourses of all kinds, I have already treated fully. The remaining species of prose compositions, which assume any such regular form, as to fall under the cognizance of criticism, seem to be chiefly these: historical writing, philosophical writing, epistolary writing, and fictitious history. Historical composition shall



be first considered; and, as it is an object of dignity, I purpose to treat of it at some length.

As it is the office of an orator to persuade, it is that of an historian to record truth for the instruction of mankind. This is the proper object and end of history, from which may be deduced many of the laws relating to it; and if this object were always kept in view, it would prevent many of the errors into which persons are apt to fall, concerning this species of composition. As the primary end of history is to record truth, impartiality, fidelity, and accuracy, are the fundamental qualities of an historian. He must neither be a panegyrist, nor a satirist. He must not enter into faction, nor give scope to affection: but, contemplating past events and characters with a cool and dispassionate eye, must present to his readers a faithful copy of human nature.

At the same time, it is not every record of facts, however true, that is entitled to the name of history; but such a record as enables us to apply the transactions of former ages for our own instruction. The facts ought to be momentous and important; represented in connexion with their causes; traced to their effects; and unfolded in clear and distinct order. For wisdom is the great end of history. It is designed to supply the want of experience. Though it enforce not its instructions with the same authority, yet it furnishes us with a greater variety of instructions, than it is possible for experience to afford, in the course of the longest life. Its object is to enlarge our views of the human character, and to give full exercise to our judgment on human affairs. It must not therefore be a tale, calculated to please only, and addressed to the fancy. Gravity and dignity are essential characteristics of history; no light ornaments are to be employed, no flippancy of style, no quaintness of wit. But the writer must sustain the character of a wise man, writing for the instruction of posterity; one who has studied to inform himself well, who has pondered his subject with care, and addresses himself to our judgment, rather than to our imagination. Not that this is inconsistent with ornamented and spirited narration. History admits of much high ornament and elegance; but the ornaments must be always

ways consistent with dignity; they should not appear to be sought after; but to rise naturally from a mind animated by the events which it records.

Historical composition is understood to comprehend under it, annals, memoirs, lives. But these are its inferior subordinate species; on which I shall hereafter make some reflections, when I shall have first considered what belongs to a regular and legitimate work of history. Such a work is chiefly of two kinds, either the entire history of some state or kingdom through its different revolutions, such as Livy's Roman History; or the history of some one great event, or some portion or period of time which may be considered as making a whole by itself; such as, Thucydides's History of the Peloponnesian war, Davila's History of the civil wars of France, or Clarendon's of those of England.

In the conduct and management of his subject, the first attention requisite in an historian, is to give it as much unity as possible; that is, his history should not consist of separate unconnected parts merely, but should be bound together by some connecting principle, which shall make the impression on the mind of something that is one, whole and entire. It is inconceivable how great effect this, when happily executed, has upon a reader, and it is surprising that some able writers of history have not attended to it more. Whether pleasure or instruction be the end sought by the study of history, either of them is enjoyed to much greater advantage, when the mind has always before it the progress of some one great plan or system of actions; when there is some point or centre, to which we can refer the various facts related by the historian.

In general histories, which record the affairs of a whole nation or empire throughout several ages, this unity, I confess, must be more imperfect. Yet even there, some degree of it can be preserved by a skilful writer. For though the whole, taken together, be very complex, yet the great constituent parts of it, form so many subordinate wholes, when taken by themselves; each of which can be treated both as complete within itself, and as connected with what goes before and follows. In the history of a monarchy, for instance, every reign should have

its

its own unity; a beginning, a middle, and an end to the ſyſtem of affairs; while, at the ſame time, we are taught to diſcern how that ſyſtem of affairs roſe from the preceding, and how it is inſerted into what follows after. We ſhould be able to trace all the ſecret links of the chain, which binds together remote, and ſeemingly unconnected events. In ſome kingdoms of Europe, it was the plan of many ſucceeding princes to reduce the power of their nobles; and during ſeveral reigns, moſt of the leading actions had a reference to this end. In other ſtates, the riſing power of the commons, influenced for a track of time the courſe and connexion of public affairs. Among the Romans, the leading principle was a gradual extenſion of conqueſt, and the attainment of univerſal empire. The continual increaſe of their power, advancing towards this end from ſmall beginnings, and by a ſort of regular progreſſive plan, furniſhed to Livy a happy ſubject for hiſtorical unity, in the midſt of a great variety of tranſactions.

Of all the ancient general hiſtorians, the one who had the moſt exact idea of this quality of hiſtorical compoſition, though, in other reſpects, not an elegant writer, is Polybius. This appears from the account he gives of his own plan in the beginning of his third book; obſerving that the ſubject of which he had undertaken to write, is, throughout the whole of it, one action, one great ſpectacle; how, and by what cauſes, all the parts of the habitable world became ſubject to the Roman Empire. "This action," ſays he, "is diſtinct in its beginning, "determined in its duration, and clear in its final accompliſhment; therefore, I think it of uſe, to give a general view "beforehand, of the chief conſtituent parts which make up "this whole." In another place, he congratulates himſelf on his good fortune, in having a ſubject for hiſtory, which allowed ſuch variety of parts to be united under one view; remarking, that before this period, the affairs of the world were ſcattered, and without connexion; whereas, in the times of which he writes, all the great tranſactions of the world tended and verged to one point, and were capable of being conſidered as parts of one ſyſtem. Whereupon he adds ſeveral very judicious obſervations, concerning the uſefulneſs of writing hiſtory

upon such a comprehensive, and connected plan; comparing the imperfect degree of knowledge, which is afforded by particular facts without general views, to the imperfect idea which one would entertain of an animal, who had beheld its separate parts only, without having ever seen its entire form and structure.*

Such as write the history of some particular great transactions, as confine themselves to one æra, or one portion of the history of a nation, have so great advantages for preserving historical unity, that they are inexcusable if they fail in it. Sallust's Histories of the Catilinarian and Jugurthine wars, Xenophon's Cyropœdia, and his Retreat of the Ten Thousand, are instances of particular histories, where the unity of historical object is perfectly well maintained. Thucydides, otherwise a writer of great strength and dignity, has failed much, in this article, in his history of the Peloponnesian war. No one great object is properly pursued, and kept in view; but his narration is cut down into small pieces; his history is divided by summers and winters; and we are every now and then leaving transactions unfinished, and are hurried from place to place, from Athens to Sicily, from thence to Peloponnesus, to Corcyra, to Mitylene, that we may be told of what is going on in all these places. We have a great many disjointed parts and scattered limbs, which with difficulty we collect into one body; and through this faulty distribution and management of his subject, that judicious historian becomes more tiresome, and less agreeable than he would otherwise be. For these reasons he

* Καθολυ μὲν γαρ ἔμοιγε δοκουσιν οἱ πεπεισμένοι διὰ της κατα μέρος ἱσοριάς μετρίως συνοψέσθαι τὰ ὅλά, παραπλήσιον· τι πάσχειν, ὥς ἂν εἰ τινοθ ἐμψυχυ και καλοῦ σωματος γεγονοτος διερρέμενα τα μερη θεώμενοι, νομίζοιεν ἱκανῶς αὐτοπται γίνεσθαι της ενεργειας αὐτοῦ τυ ζώου και καλλονης. ει γάρ τις ἀυτίκα μαλα συνθεις και τέλειον αυθις ἀπεργασαμενος τον ζῶον, τῳ τε εἴδει δε τῆ τῆς ψυχης ευπρεπεια κἄπειτα παλίν ἐπδεινύει τοῖς ἀυτοίς ἐκείνοις, ταχεως ἂν οἶμαι πάντας ἀυτούς ὁμολολήσειν διὸ τι καὶ λίαν πολύτις τῆς ἀληθείας ἀπελείποντο προσθέν καὶ παραπλήσιον τοις ὀνειρώτlουσιν ἦσαν. ἔννοιαν μὲν γὰρ λαβειν απο μερυς τῶν ὁλων δυνατον. ἐπιςήμην δὲ καὶ γνώμην ἀτρεκῆ ἔχειν ἀδύνατον. διο παντελῶς βραχύli νομιστον συμβάλλεσθαι τὴν κατὰ μέρος ἱσορίαν· προς τὴν τῶν ὁλων ἐμπειρίαν και πίσιν. ἐκ μέν τοιγε τής αἀπαντων προς ἄλληλα συμπλοκῆς και παραθέσεως, ετιδ' ὁμοιοτηlος και διαφορᾶς μονως ἂν τις ἐφίκοιτο δε δύνηθείη κατοπτευσας, ἅμα καὶ τὸν χρήσιμον καί τον τερπνὸν, εκ της ἱσορίας λαβεῖν. Polyb. Histor. Prim.

he is severely censured by one of the best critics of antiquity, Dionysius of Halicarnassus.*

The historian must not indeed neglect chronological order, with a view to render his narration agreeable. He must give a distinct account of the dates, and of the coincidence of facts. But he is not under the necessity of breaking off always in the middle of transactions, in order to inform us of what was happening elsewhere at the same time. He discovers no art, if he cannot form some connexion among the affairs which he relates, so as to introduce them in a proper train. He will soon tire the reader, if he goes on recording, in strict chronological order, a multitude of separate transactions, connected by nothing else, but their happening at the same time.

Though the history of Herodotus be of greater compass than that of Thucydides, and comprehends a much greater number of dissimilar parts, he has been more fortunate in joining them together; and digesting them into order. Hence he is a more pleasing writer, and gives a stronger impression of his subject; though in judgment and accuracy, much inferior to Thucydides.

* The censure which Dionysius passes upon Thucydides, is, in several articles, carried too far. He blames him for the choice of his subject, as not sufficiently splendid and agreeable, and as abounding too much in crimes and melancholy events, on which he observes that Thucydides loves to dwell. He is partial to Herodotus, whom, both for the choice and the conduct of his subject, he prefers to the other historian. It is true, that the subject of Thucydides wants the gaiety and splendour of that of Herodotus; but it is not deficient in dignity. The Peloponnesian war was the contest between two great rival powers, the Athenian and Lacedemonian states, for the empire of Greece. Herodotus loves to dwell on prosperous incidents, and retains somewhat of the amusing manner of the ancient poetical historians, but Herodotus wrote to the imagination. Thucydides writes to the understanding. He was a grave reflecting man, well acquainted with human life; and the melancholy events and catastrophes which he records, are often both the most interesting parts of history, and the most improving to the heart.

The critic's observations on the faulty distribution which Thucydides makes of his subject are better founded, and his preference of Herodotus, in this respect, is not unjust.—Θυκυδιδης μεν τοις χρονοις ἀκολυθων, Ἡροδοτος δε ταις περιοδαις τ̃ πραγματων, γιγνεται Θυκυδιδης ἀσαφης και δυσπαρακολυθητος. πολλων γαρ κατα το αυτο θερος και χειμωνα γιγνομενων εν διαφοραις τοποις, ημιτελεις τας πρωτας πραξεις καταλιπων, ἑτερων απτεται των κατα το αυτο θερος και χειμωνα γιγνομενων. πλανωμεθα δη καθαπερ εικος, και δυσκολως τοις δηλυμενοις παρακολυθυμεν. Συμβεβηκε Θυκυδιδη μιαν ὑποθεσιν λαβοντι πολλα ποιησαι μερη το εν σωμα. Ἡροδοτω δε τας πολλας και υδεν εοικυιας ὑποθεσεις προαιρομενω συμφωνον εν σωμα πεποιηκεναι.—With regard to style, Dionysius gives Thucydides the just praise of energy and brevity; but censures him, on many occasions, not without reason, for harsh and obscure expression, deficient in smoothness and ease.

ides. With digreſſions and epiſodes he abounds; but where theſe have any connexion with the main ſubject, and are inſerted profeſſedly as epiſodes, the unity of the whole is leſs violated by them, than by a broken and ſcattered narration of the principal ſtory. Among the moderns, the Preſident Thuanus has, by attempting to make the hiſtory of his own times too univerſal, fallen into the ſame error, of loading the reader with a great variety of unconnected facts, going on together in different parts of the world: an hiſtorian otherwiſe of great probity, candour, and excellent underſtanding; but through this want of unity, more tedious, and leſs intereſting than he would otherwiſe have been.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXVI.

HISTORICAL WRITING.

AFTER making some observations on the controversy which has been often carried on concerning the comparative merit of the ancients and the moderns, I entered, in the last Lecture, on the consideration of historical writing. The general idea of history is, a record of truth for the instruction of mankind. Hence arise the primary qualities required in a good historian, impartiality, fidelity, gravity, and dignity. What I principally considered, was the unity which belongs to this sort of composition; the nature of which I have endeavoured to explain.

I proceed next to observe, that in order to fulfil the end of history, the Author must study to trace to their springs the actions and events which he records. Two things are especially necessary for his doing this successfully; a thorough acquaintance with human nature, and political knowledge, or acquaintance with government. The former is necessary to account for the conduct of individuals, and to give just views of their character; the latter, to account for the revolutions of government, and the operation of political causes on public affairs. Both must concur, in order to form a completely instructive historian.

With regard to the latter article, political knowledge, the ancient writers wanted some advantages which the moderns enjoy; from whom, upon that account, we have a title to expect more accurate and precise information. The world, as I formerly hinted, was more shut up in ancient times, than it is now; there was then less communication among neighbouring states, and by consequence, less knowledge of one another's affairs; no intercourse by established posts, or by ambassadors resident

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at distant courts. The knowledge, and materials of the ancient historians, were thereby more limited and circumscribed; and it is to be observed too, that they wrote for their own countrymen only; they had no idea of writing for the instruction of foreigners, whom they despised, or of the world in general; and hence, they are less attentive to convey all that knowledge with regard to domestic policy, which we, in distant times, would desire to have learned from them. Perhaps, also, though in ancient ages men were abundantly animated with the love of liberty, yet the full extent of the influence of government, and of political causes, was not then so thoroughly scrutinized, as it has been in modern times; when a longer experience of all the different modes of government, has rendered men more enlightened and intelligent, with respect to public affairs.

To these reasons it is owing, that though the ancient historians set before us the particular facts which they relate, in a very distinct and beautiful manner, yet sometimes they do not give us a clear view of all the political causes, which affected the situation of affairs of which they treat. From the Greek historians, we are able to form but an imperfect notion, of the strength, the wealth, and the revenues of the different Grecian states; of the causes of several of those revolutions that happened in their government; or of their separate connexions and interfering interests. In writing the history of the Romans, Livy had surely the most ample field for displaying political knowledge concerning the rise of their greatness, and the advantages or defects of their government. Yet the instruction in these important articles, which he affords, is not considerable. An elegant writer he is, and a beautiful relater of facts, if ever there was one; but by no means distinguished for profoundness or penetration. Sallust, when writing the history of a conspiracy against the government, which ought to have been altogether a political history, has evidently attended more to the elegance of narration, and the painting of characters, than to the unfolding of secret causes and springs. Instead of that complete information, which we would naturally have expected from him of the state of parties in Rome, and of that particular conjuncture of affairs, which enabled so desperate a profligate as Catiline to become so formidable to government, he

he has given us little more than a general declamatory account of the luxury and corruption of manners in that age, compared with the ſimplicity of former times.

I by no means, however, mean to cenſure all the ancient hiſtorians as defective in political information. No hiſtorians can be more inſtructive than Thucydides, Polybius, and Tacitus. Thucydides is grave, intelligent, and judicious; always attentive to give very exact information concerning every operation which he relates; and to ſhew the advantages or diſadvantages of every plan that was propoſed, and every meaſure that was purſued. Polybius excels in comprehenſive political views, in penetration into great ſyſtems, and in his profound and diſtinct knowledge of all military affairs. Tacitus is eminent for his knowledge of the human heart; is ſentimental and refined in a high degree; conveys much inſtruction with reſpect to political matters, but more with reſpect to human nature.

But when we demand from the hiſtorian profound and inſtructive views of his ſubject, it is not meant that he ſhould be frequently interrupting the courſe of his hiſtory, with his own reflections and ſpeculations. He ſhould give us all the information that is neceſſary for our fully underſtanding the affairs which he records. He ſhould make us acquainted with the political conſtitution, the force, the revenues, the internal ſtate of the country of which he writes; and with its intereſts and connexions in reſpect of neighbouring countries. He ſhould place us, as on an elevated ſtation, whence we may have an extenſive proſpect of all the cauſes that co-operate in bringing forward the events which are related. But having put into our hands all the proper materials for judgment, he ſhould not be too prodigal of his own opinions and reaſonings. When an hiſtorian is much given to diſſertation, and is ready to philoſophiſe and ſpeculate on all that he records, a ſuſpicion naturally ariſes, that he will be in hazard of adapting his narrative of facts to favour ſome ſyſtem which he has formed to himſelf. It is rather by fair and judicious narration that hiſtory ſhould inſtruct us, than by delivering inſtruction in an avowed and direct manner. On ſome occaſions, when doubtful points require to be ſcrutinized, or when ſome great event is in agitation, concerning the cauſes or circumſtances of which mankind have been much divided, the narrative may

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be allowed to stand still for a little; the historian may appear, and may with propriety enter into some weighty discussion. But he must take care not to cloy his readers with such discussions, by repeating them too often.

When observations are to be made concerning human nature in general, or the peculiarities of certain characters, if the historian can artfully incorporate such observations with his narrative, they will have a better effect than when they are delivered as formal detached reflections. For instance; in the life of Agricola, Tacitus, speaking of Domitian's treatment of Agricola, makes this observation: "Proprium humani ingenii "est, odisse quem læseris."* The observation is just and well applied; but the form in which it stands, is abstract and philosophical. A thought of the same kind has a finer effect elsewhere in the same historian, when speaking of the jealousies which Germanicus knew to be entertained against him by Livia and Tiberius: "Anxius," said he, "occultis in se pa-"trui avæque odiis, quorum causæ acriores quia iniquæ."† Here a profound moral observation is made; but it is made, without appearing to make it in form; it is introduced as a part of the narration, in assigning a reason for the anxiety of Germanicus. We have another instance of the same kind, in the account which he gives of a mutiny raised against Rufus, who was a "Præfectus Castrorum," on account of the severe labour which he imposed on the soldiers. "Quippe Rufus, "diu manipularis, dein centurio, mox castris præfectus, anti-"quam duramque militiam revocabat, vetus operis & laboris, "& eo immitior quia toleraverat."‡ There was room for turning this into a general observation, that they who have been educated and hardened in toils, are commonly found to be the most severe in requiring the like toils from others. But the manner in which Tacitus introduces this sentiment, as a stroke in the character of Rufus, gives it much more life and spirit.

This

* "It belongs to human nature, to hate the man whom you have injured."

† "Uneasy in his mind, on account of the concealed hatred entertained "against him by his uncle and grandmother, which was the more bitter, "because the cause of it was unjust."

‡ "For Rufus, who had been long a common soldier, afterwards a centu-"rion, and at length a general officer, restored the severe military discipline of "ancient times. Grown old amidst toils and labours, he was more rigid in "imposing them, because he had been accustomed to bear them."

This historian has a particular talent of intermixing, after this manner, with the course of his narrative, many striking sentiments and useful observations.

Let us next proceed to consider the proper qualities of historical narration. It is obvious, that on the manner of narration much must depend, as the first notion of history is the recital of past facts; and how much one mode of recital may be preferable to another we shall soon be convinced, by thinking of the different effects, which the same story, when told by two different persons, is found to produce.

The first virtue of historical narration, is clearness, order, and due connexion. To attain this, the historian must be completely master of his subject; he must see the whole as at one view; and comprehend the chain and dependence of all its parts, that he may introduce every thing in its proper place; that he may lead us smoothly along the track of affairs which are recorded, and may always give us the satisfaction of seeing how one event arises out of another. Without this, there can be neither pleasure nor instruction, in reading history. Much for this end will depend on the observance of that unity in the general plan and conduct, which, in the preceding Lecture, I recommended. Much too will depend on the proper management of transitions, which forms one of the chief ornaments of this kind of writing, and is one of the most difficult in execution. Nothing tries an historian's abilities more, than so to lay his train beforehand, as to make us pass naturally and agreeably from one part of his subject to another; to employ no clumsy and awkward junctures; and to contrive ways and means of forming some union among transactions, which seem to be most widely separated from one another.

In the next place, as history is a very dignified species of composition, gravity must always be maintained in the narration. There must be no meanness nor vulgarity in the style; no quaint nor colloquial phrases; no affectation of pertness, or of wit. The smart, or the sneering manner of telling a story, is inconsistent with the historical character. I do not say, that an historian is never to let himself down. He may sometimes do it with propriety, in order to diversify the strain of his narration, which, if it be perfectly uniform, is apt to become tiresome. But he should be careful never to descend

too far; and on occasions where a light or ludicrous anecdote is proper to be recorded, it is generally better to throw it into a note, than to hazard becoming too familiar, by introducing it into the body of the work.

But an historian may possess these qualities of being perspicuous, distinct, and grave, and may notwithstanding be a dull writer; in which case, we shall reap little benefit from his labours; or, most probably, we shall soon give over to read him at all. He must therefore study to render his narration interesting; which is the quality that chiefly distinguishes a writer of genius and eloquence.

Two things are especially conducive to this; the first is, a just medium in the conduct of narration, between a rapid or crowded recital of facts, and a prolix detail. The former embarrasses, and the latter tires us. An historian that would interest us, must know when to be concise, and where he ought to enlarge; passing concisely over slight and unimportant events, but dwelling on such as are striking and considerable in their nature, or pregnant with consequences; preparing beforehand our attention to them, and bringing them forth into the most full and conspicuous light. The next thing he must attend to, is a proper selection of the circumstances belonging to those events, which he chooses to relate fully. General facts make a slight impression on the mind. It is by means of circumstances and particulars properly chosen, that a narration becomes interesting and affecting to the reader. These give life, body, and colouring to the recital of facts, and enable us to behold them as present, and passing before our eyes. It is this employment of circumstances, in narration, that is properly termed historical painting.

In all these virtues of narration, particularly in this last of picturesque descriptive narration, several of the ancient historians eminently excel. Hence, the pleasure that is found in reading Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus. They are all conspicuous for the art of narration. Herodotus is, at all times, an agreeable writer, and relates every thing with that *naïveté* and simplicity of manner, which never fails to interest the reader. Though the manner of Thucydides be more dry and harsh, yet, on great occasions, as when he is giving an account of the plague of Athens, the

siege

siege of Platæa, the sedition in Corcyra, the defeat of the Athenians in Sicily, he displays a very strong and masterly power of description. Xenophon's Cyropœdia, and his Anabasis, or retreat of the Ten Thousand, are extremely beautiful. The circumstances are finely selected, and the narration is easy and engaging; but his Hellenics, or Continuation of the History of Thucydides, is a much inferior work. Sallust's Art of Historical Painting in his Catilinarian, but, more especially, in his Jugurthine War, is well known; though his style is liable to censure, as too studied and affected.

Livy is more unexceptionable in his manner, and is excelled by no historian whatever in the art of narration: several remarkable examples might be given from him. His account, for instance, of the famous defeat of the Roman army by the Samnites, at the Furcæ Caudinæ, in the beginning of the ninth book, affords one of the most beautiful exemplifications of historical painting, that is any where to be met with. We have first, an exact description of the narrow pass between two mountains, into which the enemy had decoyed the Romans. When they find themselves caught, and no hope of escape left, we are made to see, first, their astonishment, next, their indignation, and then, their dejection, painted in the most lively manner, by such circumstances and actions as were natural to persons in their situation. The restless and unquiet manner in which they pass the night; the consultations of the Samnites; the various measures proposed to be taken; the messages between the two armies, all heighten the scene. At length, in the morning, the consuls return to the camp, and inform them that they could receive no other terms but that of surrendering their arms, and passing under the yoke, which was considered as the last mark of ignominy for a conquered army. Part of what then follows, I shall give in the author's own words. "Redintegravit luctum in castris consulum adventus; ut vix ab iis abstinerent manus, quorum temeritate in eum locum deducti essent. Alii alios intueri, contemplari arma mox tradenda, & inermes futuras dextras; proponere sibimet ipsi ante oculos, jugum hostile, et ludibria victoris, et vultus superbos, et per armatos inermium iter. Inde fædi agminis miserabilem viam; per sociorum urbes reditum in

"patriam.

"patriam ac parentes quo sæpe ipsi triumphantes venissent. "Se solos sine vulnere, sine ferro, sine acie victos; sibi non "stringere licuisse gladios, non manum cum hoste conserere; "sibi nequicquam arma, nequicquam vires, nequicquam ani-"mos datos. Hæc frementibus, hora fatalis ignominiæ advenit. "Jamprimum, cum singulis vestimentis, inermes extra vallum "abire jussi. Tum a consulibus abire lictores jussi, paluda-"mentaque detracta. Tantam hoc inter ipsos, qui paulo ante "eos dedendos, lacerandosque censuerant, miserationem fecit, "ut suæ quisque conditionis oblitus, ab illa deformatione tan-"tæ majestatis velut ab nefando spectaculo, averteret oculos. "Primi consules, prope seminudi, sub jugum missi,"* &c. The rest of the story which it would be too long to insert, is carried on with the same beauty, and full of picturesque circumstances.†

Tacitus

* "The arrival of the consuls in the camp, wrought up their passions to "such a degree, that they could scarcely abstain from laying violent hands on "them, as by their rashness they had been brought into this situation. They "began to look on one another; to cast a melancholy eye on their arms, "which were now to be surrendered, and on their right hands, which were "to become defenceless. The yoke under which they were to pass; the "scoffs of the conquerors; and their haughty looks, when disarmed and "stripped, they should be led through the hostile lines; all rose before their "eyes. They then looked forward to the sad journey which awaited them, "when they were to pass as a vanquished and disgraced army through the "territories of their allies, by whom they had often been beheld returning in "triumph to their families and native land. They alone, they muttered to one "another, without an engagement, without a single blow, had been conquered. "To their hard fate it fell, never to have had it in their power to draw a sword, "or to look an enemy in the face; to them only, arms, strength, and courage, "had been given in vain. While they were thus giving vent to their indig-"nation, the fatal moment of their ignominy arrived. First, they were all "commanded to come forth from the camp, without armour, and in a single "garment. Next, orders were given, that the consuls should be left without "their lictors, and that they should be stripped of their robes. Such com-"miseration did this affront excite among them, who, but a little before, had "been for delivering up those very consuls, to the enemy, and for putting "them to death, that every one forgot his own condition, and turned his eyes "aside from this infamous disgrace, suffered by the consular dignity, as from "a spectacle which was too detestable to be beheld. The consuls, almost half "naked, were first made to pass under the yoke, &c."

† The description which Cæsar gives of the consternation occasioned in his camp, by the accounts which were spread among his troops, of the ferocity, the size, and the courage of the Germans, affords an instance of historical painting, executed in a simple manner; and, at the same time, exhibiting a natural and lively scene: "Dum paucos dies ad Vesontionem moratur, ex "percunctatione nostrorum, vocibusque Gallorum ac mercatorum, qui ingenti "magnitudine corporum Germanos, incredibili virtute, atque exercitatione in "armis esse prædicabant; sæpe numero sese cum iis congressos, ne vultum qui-

"dem,

Tacitus is another author eminent for historical painting, though in a manner altogether different from that of Livy. Livy's descriptions are more full; more plain, and natural; those of Tacitus consist in a few bold strokes. He selects one or two remarkable circumstances, and sets them before us in a strong, and, generally, in a new and uncommon light. Such is the following picture of the situation of Rome, and of the emperor Galba, when Otho was advancing against him: "Agebatur "huc illuc Galba, vario, turbæ fluctuantis impulsu, completis "undique basilicis et templis, lugubri prospectu. Neque pop-"uli aut plebis ulla vox; sed attoniti vultus, et conversæ ad "omnia aures. Non tumultus, non quies; sed quale magni "metûs, et magnæ iræ, silentium est."* No image, in any poet, is more strong and expressive than this last stroke of the description: "Non tumultus, non quies, sed quale," &c. This is a conception of the sublime kind, and discovers high genius. Indeed, throughout all his work, Tacitus shows the hand of a master. As he is profound in reflection, so he is striking in description, and pathetic in sentiment. The philosopher, the poet, and the historian, all meet in him. Though the period of which he writes may be reckoned unfortunate for an historian, he has made it afford us many interesting exhibitions of human nature. The relations which he gives of the deaths of several eminent personages, are as affecting as the deepest tragedies. He paints with a glowing pencil; and possesses, beyond all writers, the talent of painting, not to the imagination merely, but to the heart. With many of the most distinguished beau-

ties,

"dem, atque aciem oculorum ferre potuisse; tantus subito terror omnem "exercitum occupavit, ut non mediocriter omnium mentes animosque pertur-"baret. Hic primum ortus est a tribunis militum, ac præfectis, reliquisque "qui ex urbe, amicitiæ causa, Cæsarem secuti, suum periculum miserabantur, "quod non magnum in re militari usum habebant: quorum alius, aliâ causâ "illatâ quam sibi ad proficiscendum necessariam esse diceret, petebat ut ejus "voluntate discedere liceret. Nonnulli pudore adducti, ut timoris suspicionem "vitarent, remanebant. Hi neque vultum fingere, neque interdum lacrymas "tenere poterant. Abditi in tabernaculis, aut suum fatum quærebantur, aut "cum familiaribus suis, commune periculum miserabantur. Vulgo, totis "castris testamenta obsignabantur." De Bell. Gall. L. I.

* "Galba was driven to and fro by the tide of the multitude, shoving him "from place to place. The temples and public buildings were filled with "crowds, of a dismal appearance. No clamours were heard, either from the "citizens, or from the rabble. Their countenances were filled with conster-"nation; their ears were employed in listening with anxiety. It was not a "tumult; it was not quietness; it was the silence of terror, and of wrath."

ties, he is, at the ſame time, not a perfect model for hiſtory, and ſuch as have formed themſelves upon him, have ſeldom been ſucceſsful. He is to be admired, rather than imitated. In his reflections, he is two refined; in his ſtyle, too conciſe, ſometimes quaint and affected, often abrupt and obſcure. Hiſtory ſeems to require a more natural, flowing, and popular manner.

The ancients employed one embelliſhment of hiſtory which the moderns have laid aſide, I mean orations, which, on weighty occaſions, they put into the mouths of ſome of their chief perſonages. By means of theſe, they diverſified their hiſtory; they conveyed both moral and political inſtruction; and, by the oppoſite arguments which were employed, they gave us a view of the ſentiments of different parties. Thucydides was the firſt who introduced this method. The orations with which his hiſtory abounds, and thoſe too of ſome other Greek and Latin hiſtorians, are among the moſt valuable remains which we have of ancient eloquence. How beautiful ſoever they are, it may be much queſtioned, I think, whether they find a proper place in hiſtory. I rather incline to think, that they are unſuitable to it. For they form a mixture which is unnatural in hiſtory, of fiction with truth. We know that theſe orations are entirely of the author's own compoſition, and that he has introduced ſome celebrated perſon haranguing in a public place, purely that he might have an opportunity of ſhowing his own eloquence, or delivering his own ſentiments, under the name of that perſon. This is a ſort of poetical liberty which does not ſuit the gravity of hiſtory, throughout which, an air of the ſtricteſt truth ſhould always reign. Orations may be an embelliſhment to hiſtory; ſuch might alſo poetical compoſitions be, introduced under the name of ſome of the perſonages mentioned in the narration, who were known to have poſſeſſed poetical talents. But neither the one, nor the other, find a proper place in hiſtory. Inſtead of inſerting formal orations, the method adopted by later writers, ſeems better and more natural; that of the hiſtorian, on ſome great occaſion, delivering, in his own perſon, the ſentiments and reaſonings of the oppoſite parties, or the ſubſtance of what was underſtood to be ſpoken in ſome public aſſembly; which he may do without the liberty of fiction.

The

The drawing of characters is one of the most splendid, and, at the same time, one of the most difficult ornaments of historical composition. For characters are generally considered, as professed exhibitions of fine writing; and an historian, who seeks to shine in them, is frequently in danger of carrying refinement to excess, from a desire of appearing very profound and penetrating. He brings together so many contrasts, and subtile oppositions of qualities, that we are rather dazzled with sparkling expressions, than entertained with any clear conception of a human character. A writer who would characterise in an instructive and masterly manner, should be simple in his style, and should avoid all quaintness and affectation; at the same time, not contenting himself with giving us general outlines only, but descending into those peculiarities which mark a character, in its most strong and distinctive features. The Greek historians sometimes give elogiums, but rarely draw full and professed characters. The two ancient authors who have laboured this part of historical composition most, are Sallust and Tacitus.

As history is a species of writing designed for the instruction of mankind, sound morality should always reign in it. Both in describing characters, and in relating transactions, the author should always show himself to be on the side of virtue. To deliver moral instruction in a formal manner, falls not within his province; but both as a good man, and as a good writer, we expect that he should discover sentiments of respect for virtue, and of indignation at flagrant vice. To appear neutral and indifferent with respect to good and bad characters, and to affect a crafty and political, rather than a moral turn of thought, will, besides other bad effects, derogate greatly from the weight of historical composition, and will render the strain of it much more cold and uninteresting. We are always most interested in the transactions which are going on, when our sympathy is awakened by the story, and when we become engaged in the fate of the actors. But this effect can never be produced by a writer, who is deficient in sensibility, and moral feeling.

As the observations which I have hitherto made, have most respected the ancient historians, it may naturally be expected, that I should also take some notice of the moderns who have excelled in this kind of writing.

The

The country in Europe, where the historical genius has, in latter ages, shone forth with most lustre, beyond doubt, is Italy. The national character of the Italians seems favourable to it. They were always distinguished as an acute, penetrating, reflecting people, remarkable for political sagacity and wisdom, and who early addicted themselves to the arts of writing. Accordingly, soon after the restoration of letters, Machiavel, Guicciardin, Davila, Bentivoglio, Father Paul, became highly conspicuous for historical merit. They all appear to have conceived very just ideas of history; and are agreeable, instructive, and interesting writers. In their manner of narration, they are much formed upon the ancients; some of them, as Bentivoglio and Guicciardin, have, in imitation of them, introduced orations into their history. In the profoundness and distinctness of their political views, they may, perhaps, be esteemed to have surpassed the ancients. Critics have, at the same time, observed some imperfections in each of them. Machiavel, in his history of Florence, is not altogether so interesting as one would expect an author of his abilities to be; either through his own defect, or through some unhappiness in his subject, which led him into a very minute detail of the intrigues of one city. Guicciardin, at all times sensible and profound, is taxed for dwelling so long on the Tuscan affairs as to be sometimes tedious; a defect which is also imputed, occasionally, to the judicious Father Paul. Bentivoglio, in his excellent history of the wars of Flanders, is accused of approaching to the florid and pompous manner: and Davila, though one of the most agreeable and entertaining relaters, has manifestly this defect of spreading a sort of uniformity over all his characters, by representing them as guided too regularly by political interest. But, although some such objections may be made to these authors, they deserve, upon the whole, to be placed in the first rank of modern historical writers. The wars of Flanders, written in Latin by Famianus Strada, is a book of some note; but is not entitled to the same reputation as the works of the other historians I have named. Strada is too violently partial to the Spanish cause; and too open a panegyrist of the Prince of Parma. He is florid, diffuse, and an affected imitator of the manner and style of Livy.

Among

Among the French, as there has been much good writing in many kinds, ſo alſo in the hiſtorical. That ingenious nation, who have done ſo much honour to modern literature, poſſeſs, in an eminent degree, the talent of narration. Many of their later hiſtorical writers are ſpirited, lively, and agreeable; and ſome of them not deficient in profoundneſs and penetration. They have not, however, produced any ſuch capital hiſtorians as the Italians, whom I mentioned above.

Our iſland, till within theſe few years, was not eminent for its hiſtorical productions. Early, indeed, Scotland made ſome figure by means of the celebrated Buchanan. He is an elegant writer, claſſical in his Latinity, and agreeable both in narration and deſcription. But one cannot but ſuſpect him to be more attentive to elegance than to accuracy. Accuſtomed to form his political notions wholly upon the plans of ancient governments, the feudal ſyſtem ſeems never to have entered into his thoughts; and as this was the baſis of the Scottiſh conſtitution, his political views are, of courſe, inaccurate and imperfect. When he comes to the tranſactions of his own time, there is ſuch a change in his manner of writing, and ſuch an aſperity in his ſtyle, that, on what ſide ſoever the truth lies with regard to thoſe dubious and long controverted facts which make the ſubject of that part of his work, it is impoſſible to clear him from being deeply tinctured with the ſpirit of party.

Among the older Engliſh hiſtorians, the moſt conſiderable is Lord Clarendon. Though he writes as the profeſſed apologiſt of one ſide, yet there appears more impartiality in his relation of facts, than might at firſt be expected. A great ſpirit of virtue and probity runs through his work. He maintains all the dignity of an hiſtorian. His ſentences, indeed, are often too long, and his general manner is prolix; but his ſtyle, on the whole, is manly; and his merit, as an hiſtorian, is much beyond mediocrity. Biſhop Burnet is lively and perſpicuous; but he has hardly any other hiſtorical merit. His ſtyle is too careleſs and familiar for hiſtory; his characters are, indeed, marked with a bold and ſtrong hand; but they are generally light and ſatirical; and he abounds ſo much in little ſtories concerning himſelf, that he reſembles more a writer of memoirs than of hiſtory. During a long period, Engliſh hiſtorical

authors were little more than dull compilers; till of late the distinguished names of Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon, have raised the British character, in this species of writing, to high reputation and dignity.

I observed, in the preceding Lecture, that annals, memoirs, and lives, are the inferior kinds of historical composition. It will be proper, before dismissing this subject, to make a few observations upon them. Annals are commonly understood to signify a collection of facts, digested according to chronological order; rather serving for the materials of history, than aspiring to the name of history themselves. All that is required, therefore, in a writer of such annals, is to be faithful, distinct, and complete.

Memoirs denote a sort of composition, in which an author does not pretend to give full information of all the facts respecting the period of which he writes, but only to relate what he himself had access to know, or what he was concerned in, or what illustrates the conduct of some person, or the circumstances of some transaction, which he chooses for his subject. From a writer of memoirs, therefore, is not expected the same profound research, or enlarged information, as from a writer of history. He is not subject to the same laws of unvarying dignity and gravity. He may talk freely of himself; he may descend into the most familiar anecdotes. What is chiefly required of him is, that he be sprightly and interesting; and especially, that he inform us of things that are useful and curious; that he convey to us some sort of knowledge worth the acquiring. This is a species of writing very bewitching to such as love to write concerning themselves, and conceive every transaction, in which they had a share, to be of singular importance. There is no wonder, therefore, that a nation so sprightly as the French, should, for two centuries past, have been pouring forth a whole flood of memoirs; the greatest part of which are little more than agreeable trifles.

Some, however, must be excepted from this general character: two in particular; the memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz, and those of the Duke of Sully. From Retz's Memoirs, besides the pleasure of agreeable and lively narration, we may derive also much instruction, and much knowledge of human nature.

Though

Though his politics be often too fine spun, yet the memoirs of a professed factious leader, such as the Cardinal was, wherein he draws both his own character, and that of several great personages of his time, so fully, cannot be read by any person of good sense without benefit. The Memoirs of the Duke of Sully, in the state in which they are now given to the public, have great merit, and deserve to be mentioned with particular praise. No memoirs approach more near to the usefulness, and the dignity of a full legitimate history. They have this peculiar advantage, of giving us a beautiful display of two of the most illustrious characters which history presents; Sully himself, one of the ablest and most incorrupt ministers, and Henry IV. one of the greatest and most amiable princes of modern times. I know few books more full of virtue, and of good sense, than Sully's Memoirs; few, therefore, more proper to form both the heads and the hearts of such as are designed for public business, and action in the world.

Biography, or the writing of lives, is a very useful kind of composition; less formal and stately than history; but to the bulk of readers, perhaps, no less instructive; as it affords them the opportunity of seeing the characters and tempers, the virtues and failings of eminent men fully displayed; and admits them into a more thorough and intimate acquaintance with such persons, than history generally allows. For a writer of lives may descend, with propriety, to minute circumstances, and familiar incidents. It is expected of him, that he is to give the private, as well as the public life, of the person whose actions he records; nay, it is from private life, from familiar, domestic, and seemingly trivial occurrences, that we often receive most light into the real character. In this species of writing, Plutarch has no small merit; and to him we stand indebted for much of the knowledge that we possess, concerning several of the most eminent personages of antiquity. His matter is, indeed, better than his manner; as he cannot lay claim to any peculiar beauty or elegance. His judgment too, and his accuracy, have sometimes been taxed; but whatever defects of this kind he may be liable to, his Lives of Eminent Men will always be considered as a valuable treasure of instruction. He is remarkable for being one of the most humane

writers

writers of all antiquity; less dazzled than many of them are, with the exploits of valour and ambition; and fond of displaying his great men to us, in the more gentle lights of retirement and private life.

I cannot conclude the subject of history, without taking notice of a very great improvement which has, of late years, begun to be introduced into historical composition; I mean, a more particular attention than was formerly given to laws, customs, commerce, religion, literature, and every other thing that tends to show the spirit and genius of nations. It is now understood to be the business of an able historian to exhibit manners, as well as facts and events; and assuredly, whatever displays the state and life of mankind, in different periods, and illustrates the progress of the human mind, is more useful and interesting than the detail of sieges and battles. The person, to whom we are most indebted for the introduction of this improvement into history, is the celebrated M. Voltaire, whose genius has shone with such surprising lustre, in so many different parts of literature. His age of Louis XIV. was one of the first great productions in this taste; and soon drew, throughout all Europe, that general attention, and received that high approbation, which so ingenious and eloquent a production merited. His essay on the general history of Europe, since the days of Charlemagne, is not to be considered either as a history, or the proper plan of an historical work; but only as a series of observations on the chief events that have happened throughout several centuries, and on the changes that successively took place in the spirit and manners of different nations. Though, in some dates and facts it may, perhaps, be inaccurate, and is tinged with those particularities which unhappily distinguished Voltaire's manner of thinking on religious subjects, yet it contains so many enlarged and instructive views, as justly to merit the attention of all who either read or write the history of those ages.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXVII.

PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING. DIALOGUE. EPISTOLARY WRITING. FICTITIOUS HISTORY.

As history is both a very dignified ſpecies of compoſition, and, by the regular form which it aſſumes, falls directly under the laws of criticiſm, I diſcourſed of it fully in the two preceding Lectures. The remaining ſpecies of compoſition, in proſe, afford leſs room for critical obſervation.

Philoſophical writing, for inſtance, will not lead us into any long diſcuſſion. As the profeſſed object of philoſophy is to convey inſtruction, and as they who ſtudy it are ſuppoſed to do ſo for inſtruction, not for entertainment, the ſtyle, the form, and dreſs of ſuch writings, are leſs material objects. They are objects, however, that muſt not be wholly neglected. He who attempts to inſtruct mankind, without ſtudying, at the ſame time, to engage their attention, and to intereſt them in his ſubject by his manner of exhibiting it, is not likely to prove ſucceſsful. The ſame truths and reaſoning, delivered in a dry and cold manner, or with a proper meaſure of elegance and beauty, will make very different impreſſions on the minds of men.

It is manifeſt, that every philoſophical writer muſt ſtudy the utmoſt perſpicuity: and, by reflecting on what was formerly delivered on the ſubject of perſpicuity, with reſpect both to ſingle words, and the conſtruction of ſentences, we may be convinced that this is a ſtudy which demands conſiderable attention to the rules of ſtyle and good writing. Beyond mere perſpicuity, ſtrict accuracy and preciſion are required in a philoſophical writer. He muſt employ no words of uncertain meaning, no looſe or indeterminate expreſſions; and ſhould avoid uſing words which are ſeemingly ſynonymous, without carefully attending to the variation which they make upon the idea.

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To be clear then and precise, is one requisite which we have a title to demand from every philosophical writer. He may possess this quality, and be at the same time a very dry writer. He should therefore study some degree of embellishment, in order to render his composition pleasing and graceful. One of the most agreeable, and one of the most useful embellishments which a philosopher can employ, consists in illustrations taken from historical facts, and the characters of men. All moral and political subjects naturally afford scope for these; and wherever there is room for employing them, they seldom fail of producing a happy effect. They diversify the composition; they relieve the mind from the fatigue of mere reasoning, and at the same time raise more full conviction than any reasonings produce; for they take philosophy out of the abstract, and give weight to speculation, by shewing its connexion with real life, and the actions of mankind.

Philosophical writing admits besides of a polished, a neat, and elegant style. It admits of metaphors, comparisons, and all the calm figures of speech, by which an author may convey his sense to the understanding with clearness and force, at the same time that he entertains the imagination. He must take great care, however, that all his ornaments be of the chastest kind, never partaking of the florid or the tumid; which is so unpardonable in a professed philosopher, that it is much better for him to err on the side of naked simplicity, than on that of too much ornament. Some of the ancients, as Plato and Cicero, have left us philosophical treatises composed with much elegance and beauty. Seneca has been long and justly censured for the affectation that appears in his style. He is too fond of a certain brilliant and sparkling manner; of antitheses and quaint sentences. It cannot be denied, at the same time, that he often expresses himself with much liveliness and force; though his style, upon the whole, is far from deserving imitation. In English, Mr. Locke's celebrated Treatise on Human Understanding, may be pointed out as a model, on the one hand, of the greatest clearness and distinctness of philosophical style, with very little approach to ornament; Lord Shaftesbury's writings, on the other hand, exhibit philosophy dressed up with all the ornament which it can admit; perhaps with more than is perfectly suited to it.

Philosophical

Philoſophical compoſition ſometimes aſſumes a form, under which it mingles more with works of taſte, when carried on in the way of dialogue and converſation. Under this form the ancients have given us ſome of their chief Philoſophical works; and ſeveral of the moderns have endeavoured to imitate them. Dialogue writing may be executed in two ways, either as direct converſation, where none but the ſpeakers appear, which is the method that Plato uſes; or as the recital of a converſation, where the author himſelf appears, and gives an account of what paſſed in diſcourſe; which is the method that Cicero generally follows. But though thoſe different methods make ſome variation in the form, yet the nature of the compoſition is at bottom the ſame in both, and ſubject to the ſame laws.

A dialogue, in one or other of theſe forms, on ſome philoſophical, moral, or critical ſubject, when it is well conducted, ſtands in a high rank among the works of taſte; but is much more difficult in the execution than is commonly imagined. For it requires more than merely the introduction of different perſons ſpeaking in ſucceſſion. It ought to be a natural and ſpirited repreſentation of real converſation; exhibiting the character and manners of the ſeveral ſpeakers, and ſuiting to the character of each, that peculiarity of thought and expreſſion which diſtinguiſhes him from another. A dialogue, thus conducted, gives the reader a very agreeable entertainment; as by means of the debate going on among the perſonages, he receives a fair and full view of both ſides of the argument; and is, at the ſame time, amuſed with polite converſation, and with a diſplay of conſiſtent and well ſupported characters. An author, therefore, who has genius for executing ſuch a compoſition after this manner, has it in his power both to inſtruct and to pleaſe.

But the greateſt part of modern dialogue writers have no idea of any compoſition of this ſort; and bating the outward forms of converſation, and that one ſpeaks, and another anſwers, it is quite the ſame, as if the author ſpoke in perſon throughout the whole. He ſets up a philotheos perhaps, and a philatheos, or an A and a B; who, after mutual compliments, and after admiring the fineneſs of the morning or evening, and the beauty

ty of the prospects around them, enter into conference concerning some grave matter; and all that we know farther of them is, that the one personates the author, a man of learning, no doubt, and of good principles; and the other is a man of straw, set up to propose some trivial objections; over which the first gains a most entire triumph; and leaves his sceptical antagonist at the end much humbled, and, generally, convinced of his error. This is a very frigid and insipid manner of writing; the more so, as it is an attempt toward something which we see the author cannot support. It is the form, without the spirit of conversation. The dialogue serves no purpose, but to make awkward interruptions; and we would with more patience hear the author continuing always to reason himself, and to remove the objections that are made to his principles, than be troubled with the unmeaning appearance of two persons, whom we see to be in reality no more than one.

Among the ancients, Plato is eminent for the beauty of his dialogues. The scenery, and the circumstances of many of them, are beautifully painted. The characters of the sophists, with whom Socrates disputed, are well drawn; a variety of personages are exhibited to us; we are introduced into a real conversation, often supported with much life and spirit, after the Socratic manner. For richness and beauty of imagination, no philosophic writer, ancient or modern, is comparable to Plato. The only fault of his imagination is, such an excess of fertility as allows it sometimes to obscure his judgment. It frequently carries him into allegory, fiction, enthusiasm, and the airy regions of mystical theology. The philosopher is, at times, lost in the poet. But whether we be edified with the matter or not, (and much edification he often affords) we are always entertained with the manner; and left with a strong impression of the sublimity of the author's genius.

Cicero's dialogues, or those recitals of conversation, which he has introduced into several of his philosophical and critical works, are not so spirited, nor so characteristical, as those of Plato. Yet some, as that "De Oratore," especially, are agreeable and well supported. They show us conversation carried on among some of the principal persons of ancient Rome, with freedom, good breeding, and dignity. The author of the elegant

gant dialogue, "De Causis Corruptæ Eloquentiæ," which is annexed sometimes to the works of Quintilian, and sometimes to those of Tacitus, has happily imitated, perhaps has excelled, Cicero, in this manner of writing.

Lucian is a dialogue writer of much eminence; though his subjects are seldom such as can entitle him to be ranked among philosophical authors. He has given the model of the light and humorous dialogue, and has carried it to great perfection. A character of levity, and at the same time of wit and penetration, distinguish all his writings. His great object was, to expose the follies of superstition, and the pedantry of philosophy, which prevailed in his age; and he could not have taken any more successful method for this end, than what he has employed in his dialogues, especially in those of the gods and of the dead, which are full of pleasantry and satire. In this invention of dialogues of the dead, he has been followed by several modern authors. Fontenelle, in particular, has given us dialogues of this sort, which are sprightly and agreeable; but as for characters, whoever his personages be, they all become Frenchmen in his hands. Indeed few things in composition are more difficult, than in the course of a moral dialogue to exhibit characters properly distinguished; as calm conversation furnishes none of those assistances for bringing characters into light, which the active scenes, and interesting situations of the drama, afford. Hence few authors are eminent for characteristical dialogue on grave subjects. One of the most remarkable in the English language, is a writer of the last age, Dr. Henry More, in his divine dialogues, relating to the foundations of natural religion. Though his style be now in some measure obsolete, and his speakers be marked with the academic stiffness of those times, yet the dialogue is animated by a variety of character, and sprightliness of conversation, beyond what are commonly met with in writings of this kind. Bishop Berkeley's dialogues concerning the existence of matter, do not attempt any display of characters; but furnish an instance of a very abstract subject, rendered clear and intelligible by means of conversation properly managed.

I proceed next to make some observations on epistolary writing; which possesses a kind of middle place between the

ferious and amufing fpecies of compofition. Epiftolary writing appears, at firft view, to ftretch into a very wide field. For there is no fubject whatever, on which one may not convey his thoughts to the public, in the form of a letter. Lord Shaftefbury, for inftance, Mr. Harris, and feveral other writers, have chofen to give this form to philofophical treatifes. But this is not fufficient to clafs fuch treatifes under the head of epiftolary compofition. Though they bear, in the title'page, a letter to a friend, after the firft addrefs, the friend difappears, and we fee, that it is, in truth, the public with whom the author correfponds. Seneca's epiftles are of this fort. There is no probability that they ever paffed in correfpondence, as real letters. They are no other than mifcellaneous differtations on moral fubjects; which the author, for his convenience, chofe to put into the epiftolary form. Even where one writes a real letter on fome formal topic, as for moral or religious confolation to a perfon under diftrefs, fuch as Sir William Temple has written to the countefs of Effex on the death of her daughter, he is at liberty, on fuch occafions, to write wholly as a divine or as a philofopher, and to affume the ftyle and manner of one, without reprehenfion. We confider the author not as writing a letter, but as compofing a difcourfe, fuited particularly to the circumftances of fome one perfon.

Epiftolary writing becomes a diftinct fpecies of compofition, fubject to the cognizance of criticifm, only or chiefly, when it is of the eafy and familiar kind; when it is converfation carried on upon paper, between two friends at a diftance. Such an intercourfe, when well conducted, may be rendered very agreeable to readers of tafte. If the fubject of the letters be important, they will be the more valuable. Even though there fhould be nothing very confiderable in the fubject, yet if the fpirit and turn of the correfpondence be agreeable; if they be written in a fprightly manner, and with native grace and eafe, they may ftill be entertaining; more efpecially if there be any thing to intereft us, in the characters of thofe who write them. Hence the curiofity which the public has always difcovered, concerning the letters of eminent perfons. We expect in them to difcover fomewhat of their real character. It is childifh indeed to expect, that in letters we are to find the whole heart of the author unveiled. Concealment and difguife

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take place, more or less, in all human intercourse. But still, as letters from one friend to another make the nearest approach to conversation, we may expect to see more of a character displayed in these than in other productions, which are studied for public view. We please ourselves with beholding the writer in a situation which allows him to be at his ease, and to give vent occasionally to the overflowings of his heart.

Much, therefore, of the merit, and the agreeableness of epistolary writing, will depend on its introducing us into some acquaintance with the writer. There, if any where, we look for the man, not for the author. Its first and fundamental requisite is, to be natural and simple; for a stiff and laboured manner is as bad in a letter, as it is in conversation. This does not banish sprightliness and wit. These are graceful in letters, just as they are in conversation; when they flow easily, and without being studied; when employed so as to season, not to cloy. One who, either in conversation or in letters, affects to shine and to sparkle always, will not please long. The style of letters should not be too highly polished. It ought to be neat and correct, but no more. All nicety about words, betrays study; and hence musical periods, and appearances of number and harmony in arrangement, should be carefully avoided in letters. The best letters are commonly such as the authors have written with most facility. What the heart or the imagination dictates, always flows readily; but where there is no subject to warm or interest these, constraint appears; and hence, those letters of mere compliment, congratulation, or affected condolence, which have cost the authors most labour in composing, and which, for that reason, they perhaps consider as their master-pieces, never fail of being the most disagreeable and insipid to the readers.

It ought at the same time to be remembered, that the ease and simplicity which I have recommended in epistolary correspondence, is not to be understood as importing entire carelessness. In writing to the most intimate friend, a certain degree of attention, both to the subject and the style, is requisite and becoming. It is no more, than what we owe both to ourselves, and to the friend with whom we correspond. A slovenly and neglected manner of writing, is a disobliging mark of want of

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respect. The liberty, besides, of writing letters with too careless a hand, is apt to betray persons into imprudence in what they write. The first requisite, both in conversation and correspondence, is to attend to all the proper decorums which our own character, and that of others, demand. An imprudent expression in conversation may be forgotten and pass away; but when we take the pen into our hand, we must remember, that "Litera scripta manet."

Pliny's letters are one of the most celebrated collections which the ancients have given us, in the epistolary way. They are elegant and polite; and exhibit a very pleasing and amiable view of the author. But, according to the vulgar phrase, they smell too much of the lamp. They are too elegant and fine; and it is not easy to avoid thinking, that the author is casting an eye towards the public, when he is appearing to write only for his friends. Nothing indeed is more difficult, than for an author, who publishes his own letters, to divest himself altogether of attention to the opinion of the world in what he says; by which means, he becomes much less agreeable than a man of parts would be, if, without any constraint of this sort, he were writing to his intimate friend.

Cicero's epistles, though not so showy as those of Pliny, are, on several accounts, a far more valuable collection; indeed, the most valuable collection of letters extant in any language. They are letters of real business, written to the greatest men of the age, composed with purity and elegance, but without the least affectation; and, what adds greatly to their merit, written without any intention of being published to the world. For it appears, that Cicero never kept copies of his own letters; and we are wholly indebted to the care of his free-man Tyro, for the large collection that was made, after his death, of those which are now extant, amounting to nearly a thousand.* They contain the most authentic materials of the history of that age; and are the last monuments which remain of Rome in its free state; the greatest part of them being written during that important crisis, when the republic was on the point of ruin; the most

* See his letter to Atticus, which was written a year or two before his death, in which he tells him, in answer to some inquiries concerning his epistles, that he had no collection of them, and that Tyro had only about seventy of them. Ad ATT. 16. 5.

most interesting situation, perhaps, which is to be found in the affairs of mankind. To his intimate friends, especially to Atticus, Cicero lays open himself and his heart, with entire freedom. In the course of his correspondence with others, we are introduced into acquaintance with several of the principal personages of Rome; and it is remarkable that most of Cicero's correspondents, as well as himself, are elegant and polite writers; which serves to heighten our idea of the taste and manners of that age.

The most distinguished collection of letters in the English language, is that of Mr. Pope, Dean Swift, and their friends; partly published in Mr. Pope's works, and partly in those of Dean Swift. This collection is, on the whole, an entertaining and agreeable one; and contains much wit and ingenuity. It is not, however, altogether free of the fault which I imputed to Pliny's epistles, of too much study and refinement. In the variety of letters from different persons, contained in that collection, we find many that are written with ease, and a beautiful simplicity. Those of Dr. Arbuthnot, in particular, always deserve that praise. Dean Swift's also are unaffected; and as a proof of their being so, they exhibit his character fully, with all its defects; though it were to be wished, for the honour of his memory, that his epistolary correspondence had not been drained to the dregs, by so many successive publications, as have been given to the world. Several of Lord Bolingbroke's, and of Bishop Atterbury's letters, are masterly. The censure of writing letters in too artificial a manner, falls heaviest on Mr. Pope himself. There is visibly more study, and less of nature and the heart in his letters, than in those of some of his correspondents. He had formed himself on the manner of Voiture, and is too fond of writing like a wit. His letters to ladies are full of affectation. Even in writing to his friends, how forced an introduction is the following of a letter to Mr. Addison: "I am more joyed at your return, than I should be at "that of the sun, as much as I wish for him in this melancholy "wet season; but it is his fate too, like yours, to be displeasing "to owls and obscene animals, who cannot bear his lustre." How stiff a compliment is it, which he pays to Bishop Atterbury? "Though the noise and daily bustle for the public be

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"now over, I dare ſay, you are ſtill tendering its welfare; as "the ſun in winter, when ſeeming to retire from the world, is "preparing warmth and benedictions for a better ſeaſon." This ſentence might be tolerated in a harangue; but is very unſuitable to the ſtyle of one friend correſponding with another.

The gaiety and vivacity of the French genius appear to much advantage in their letters, and have given birth to ſeveral agreeable publications. In the laſt age, Balzac and Voiture were the two moſt celebrated epiſtolary writers. Balzac's reputation indeed ſoon declined, on account of his ſwelling periods and pompous ſtyle. But Voiture continued long a favourite author. His compoſition is extremely ſparkling; he ſhows a great deal of wit, and can trifle in the moſt entertaining manner. His only fault is, that he is too open and profeſſed a wit, to be thoroughly agreeable as a letter writer. The Letters of Madam de Sevignè are now eſteemed the moſt accompliſhed model of a familiar correſpondence. They turn indeed very much upon trifles, the incidents of the day, and the news of the town; and they are overloaded with extravagant compliments, and expreſſions of fondneſs, to her favourite daughter; but withal, they ſhow ſuch perpetual ſprightlineſs, they contain ſuch eaſy and varied narration, and ſo many ſtrokes of the moſt lively and beautiful painting, perfectly free from any affectation, that they are juſtly entitled to high praiſe. The Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague are not unworthy of being named after thoſe of Mad. de Sevignè. They have much of the French eaſe and vivacity; and retain more the character of agreeable epiſtolary ſtyle, than perhaps any letters which have appeared in the Engliſh language.

There remains to be treated of, another ſpecies of compoſition in proſe, which comprehends a very numerous, though, in general, a very inſignificant claſs of writings, known by the name of romances and novels. Theſe may, at firſt view, ſeem too inſignificant, to deſerve that any particular notice ſhould be taken of them. But I cannot be of, this opinion. Mr. Fletcher of Salton, in one of his tracts, quotes it as the ſaying of a wiſe man, that give him the making of all the ballads of a nation, he would allow any one that pleaſed to make their laws. The ſaying was founded on reflection and good ſenſe,

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and applies to the subject now before us. For any kind of writing, how trifling soever in appearance, that obtains a general currency, and especially that early pre-occupies the imagination of the youth of both sexes, must demand particular attention. Its influence is likely to be considerable, both on the morals, and taste of a nation.

In fact, fictitious histories, might be employed for very useful purposes. They furnish one of the best channels for conveying instruction, for painting human life and manners, for showing the errors into which we are betrayed by our passions, for rendering virtue amiable and vice odious. The effect of well contrived stories, towards accomplishing these purposes, is stronger than any effect that can be produced by simple and naked instruction; and hence we find, that the wisest men in all ages, have more or less employed fables and fictions, as the vehicles of knowledge. These have ever been the basis of both epic and dramatic poetry. It is not, therefore, the nature of this sort of writing considered in itself, but the faulty manner of its execution, that can expose it to any contempt. Lord Bacon takes notice of our taste for fictitious history, as a proof of the greatness and dignity of the human mind. He observes very ingeniously, that the objects of this world, and the common train of affairs which we behold going on in it, do not fill the mind, nor give it entire satisfaction. We seek for something that shall expand the mind in a greater degree: we seek for more heroic and illustrious deeds, for more diversified and surprising events, for a more splendid order of things, a more regular and just distribution of rewards and punishments than what we find here; because we meet not with these in true history, we have recourse to fictitious. We create worlds according to our fancy, in order to gratify our capacious desires: "Accommodando," says that great philosopher, "Rerum simulachra ad animi desideria, non submit-"tendo animum rebus, quod ratio facit, et historia."* Let us then, since the subject wants neither dignity nor use, make a few observations on the rise and progress of fictitious history,

* "Accommodating the appearances of things to the desires of the mind, not "bringing down the mind, as history and philosophy do, to the course of "events."

history, and the different forms it has assumed in different countries.

In all countries we find its origin very ancient. The genius of the eastern nations, in particular, was from the earliest times much turned towards invention, and the love of fiction. Their divinity, their philosophy, and their politics, were clothed in fables and parables. The Indians, the Persians, and Arabians, were all famous for their tales. The "Arabian Night's Entertainments" are the production of a romantic invention, but of a rich and amusing imagination; exhibiting a singular and curious display of manners and characters, and beautified with a very humane morality. Among the ancient Greeks, we hear of the Ionian and Milesian Tales; but they are now perished, and, from any account that we have of them, appear to have been of the loose and wanton kind. Some fictitious histories yet remain, that were composed during the decline of the Roman Empire, by Apuleius, Achilles Tatius, and Heliodorus, bishop of Trica, in the 4th century; but none of them are considerable enough to merit particular criticism.

During the dark ages, this sort of writing assumed a new and very singular form, and for a long while made a great figure in the world. The martial spirit of those nations, among whom the feudal government prevailed; the establishment of single combat, as an allowed method of deciding causes both of justice and honour; the appointment of champions in the cause of women, who could not maintain their own rights by the sword; together with the institution of military tournaments, in which different kingdoms vied with one another, gave rise, in those times, to that marvellous system of chivalry, which is one of the most singular appearances in the history of mankind. Upon this were founded those romances of knight-errantry, which carried an ideal chivalry to a still more extravagant height than it had risen in fact. There was displayed in them a new and very wonderful sort of world, hardly bearing any resemblance to the world in which we dwell. Not only knights setting forth to redress all manner of wrongs, but in every page, magicians, dragons, and giants, invulnerable men, winged horses, enchanted armour, and enchanted castles; adventures absolutely incredible, yet suited to the

the groſs ignorance of theſe ages, and to the legends, and ſuperſtitious notions concerning magic and necromancy, which then prevailed. This merit they had, of being writings of the highly moral and heroic kind. Their knights were patterns, not of courage merely, but of religion, generoſity, courteſy, and fidelity; and the heroines were no leſs diſtinguiſhed for modeſty, delicacy, and the utmoſt dignity of manners.

Theſe were the firſt compoſitions that received the name of romances. The origin of this name is traced, by Mr. Huet, the learned biſhop of Avranche, to the Provençal Troubadoures, a ſort of ſtory-tellers and bards in the county of Provence, where there ſubſiſted ſome remains of literature and poetry. The language which prevailed in that country was a mixture of Latin and Gallic, called the Roman or Romance language; and their ſtories being written in that language, hence, it is ſaid, the name of Romance, which we now apply to all fictitious compoſition.

The earlieſt of thoſe romances is that which goes under the name of Turpin, the archbiſhop of Rheims, written in the 11th century. The ſubject is, the atchievements of Charlemagne and his peers, or Paladins, in driving the Saracens out of France and part of Spain; the ſame ſubject which Arioſto has taken for his celebrated poem of Orlando Furioſo, which is truly a chivalry romance, as extravagant as any of the reſt, but partly heroic, and partly comic, embelliſhed with the higheſt graces of poetry. The Romance of Turpin was followed by Amadis de Gaul, and many more of the ſame ſtamp. The Cruſades both furniſhed new matter, and increaſed the ſpirit for ſuch writings; the Chriſtians againſt the Saracens made the common ground-work of them; and from the 11th to the 16th century, they continued to bewitch all Europe. In Spain, where the taſte for this ſort of writing had been moſt greedily caught, the ingenious Cervantes, in the beginning of the 16th century, contributed greatly to explode it; and the abolition of tournaments, the prohibition of ſingle combat, the diſbelief of magic and enchantments, and the change in general of manners throughout Europe, began to give a new turn to fictitious compoſition.

Then appeared the Aſtræa of D'urfè, the Grand Cyrus, the Clelia and Cleopatra of Mad. Scuderi, the Arcadia of Sir Philip Sidney, and other grave and ſtately compoſitions in the ſame ſtyle. Theſe may be conſidered as forming the ſecond ſtage of romance writing. The heroiſm and the gallantry, the moral and virtuous turn of the chivalry romance, were ſtill preſerved; but the dragons, the necromancers, and the enchanted caſtles, were baniſhed, and ſome ſmall reſemblance to human nature was introduced. Still, however, there was too much of the marvellous in them to pleaſe an age which now aſpired to refinement. The characters were diſcerned to be ſtrained; the ſtyle to be ſwoln; the adventures incredible; the books themſelves were voluminous and tedious.

Hence, this ſort of compoſition ſoon aſſumed a third form, and from magnificent heroic romance, dwindled down to the familiar novel. Theſe novels, both in France and England, during the age of Lewis XIV. and King Charles II. were in general of a trifling nature, without the appearance of moral tendency, or uſeful inſtruction. Since that time, however, ſomewhat better has been attempted, and a degree of reformation introduced into the ſpirit of novel writing. Imitations of life and character have been made their principal object. Relations have been profeſſed to be given of the behaviour of perſons in particular intereſting ſituations, ſuch as may actually occur in life; by means of which, what is laudable or defective in character and in conduct, may be pointed out, and placed in a uſeful light. Upon this plan, the French have produced ſome compoſitions of conſiderable merit. Gil Blas, by Le Sage, is a book full of good ſenſe, and inſtructive knowledge of the world. The works of Marivaux, eſpecially his Marianne, diſcover great refinement of thought, great penetration into human nature, and paint, with a very delicate pencil, ſome of the niceſt ſhades and features in the diſtinction of characters. The Nouvelle Heloïſe of Rouſſeau is a production of a very ſingular kind; in many of the events which are related, improbable and unnatural; in ſome of the details tedious, and for ſome of the ſcenes which are deſcribed juſtly blameable; but withal, for the power of eloquence, for tenderneſs of ſentiment, for ardour of paſſion, entitled to rank among the higheſt productions of fictitious hiſtory.

In this kind of writing we are, it muſt be confeſſed, in Great Britain, inferior to the French. We neither relate ſo agreeably, nor draw characters with ſo much delicacy; yet we are not without ſome performances which diſcover the ſtrength of the Britiſh genius. No fiction, in any language, was ever better ſupported than the Adventures of Robinſon Cruſoe. While it is carried on with that appearance of truth and ſimplicity, which takes a ſtrong hold of the imagination of all readers, it ſuggeſts, at the ſame time, very uſeful inſtruction; by ſhowing how much the native powers of a man may be exerted for ſurmounting the difficulties of any external ſituation. Mr. Fielding's novels are highly diſtinguiſhed for their humour; a humour which, if not of the moſt refined and delicate kind, is original, and peculiar to himſelf. The characters which he draws are lively and natural, and marked with the ſtrokes of a bold pencil. The general ſcope of his ſtories is favourable to humanity and goodneſs of heart; and in Tom Jones, his greateſt work, the artful conduct of the fable, and the ſubſerviency of all the incidents to the winding up of the whole, deſerve much praiſe. The moſt moral of all our novel writers, is Richardſon, the author of Clariſſa, a writer of excellent intentions, and of very conſiderable capacity and genius; did he not poſſeſs the unfortunate talent of ſpinning out pieces of amuſement into an immeaſurable length. The trivial performances which daily appear in public under the title of Lives, Adventures, and Hiſtories, by anonymous authors, if they be often innocent, yet are moſt commonly inſipid; and though in the general it ought to be admitted that characteriſtical novels, formed upon nature and upon life, without extravagance, and without licentiouſneſs, might furniſh an agreeable and uſeful entertainment to the mind; yet according as theſe writings have been, for the moſt part, conducted, it muſt alſo be confeſſed, that they oftener tend to diſſipation and idleneſs, than to any good purpoſe. Let us now therefore make our retreat from theſe regions of fiction.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

NATURE OF POETRY. ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS. VERSIFICATION.

I HAVE now finiſhed my obſervations on the different kinds of writing in proſe. What remains is, to treat of poetical compoſition. Before entering on the conſideration of any of its particular kinds, I deſign this Lecture as an introduction to the ſubject of poetry in general; wherein I ſhall treat of its nature, give an account of its riſe and origin, and make ſome obſervations on verſification, or poetical numbers.

Our firſt inquiry muſt be, what is poetry? and wherein does it differ from proſe? The anſwer to this queſtion is not ſo eaſy as might at firſt be imagined; and critics have differed and diſputed much, concerning the proper definition of poetry. Some have made its eſſence to conſiſt in fiction, and ſupport their opinion by the authority of Ariſtotle and Plato. But this is certainly too limited a definition; for though fiction may have a great ſhare in many poetical compoſitions, yet many ſubjects of poetry may not be feigned; as where the poet deſcribes objects which actually exiſt, or pours forth the real ſentiments of his own heart. Others have made the characteriſtic of poetry to lie in imitation. But this is altogether looſe; for ſeveral other arts imitate as well as poetry; and an imitation of human manners and characters, may be carried on in the humbleſt proſe, no leſs than in the moſt lofty poetic ſtrain.

The moſt juſt and comprehenſive definition which, I think, can be given of poetry, is, "That it is the language of paſſion, "or of enlivened imagination, formed, moſt commonly, into "regular numbers." The hiſtorian, the orator, the philoſopher, addreſs themſelves, for the moſt part, primarily to the underſtanding: their direct aim is to inform, to perſuade, or to inſtruct.

ſtruct. But the primary aim of a poet is to pleaſe, and to move; and, therefore, it is to the imagination, and the paſſions, that he ſpeaks. He may, and he ought to have it in his view, to inſtruct, and to reform; but it is indirectly, and by pleaſing and moving, that he accompliſhes this end. His mind is ſuppoſed to be animated by ſome intereſting object which fires his imagination, or engages his paſſions; and which, of courſe, communicates to his ſtyle a peculiar elevation ſuited to his ideas; very different from that mode of expreſſion, which is natural to the mind in its calm, ordinary ſtate. I have added to my definition, that this language of paſſion, or imagination, is formed, *moſt commonly*, into regular numbers; becauſe, though verſification be, in general, the exterior diſtinction of poetry, yet there are ſome forms of verſe ſo looſe and familiar, as to be hardly diſtinguiſhable from proſe; ſuch as the verſe of Terence's comedies; and there is alſo a ſpecies of proſe, ſo meaſured in its cadence, and ſo much raiſed in its tone, as to approach very near to poetical numbers; ſuch as the Telemachus of Fenelon; and the Engliſh Tranſlation of Oſſian. The truth is, verſe and proſe, on ſome occaſions, run into one another, like light and ſhade.. It is hardly poſſible to determine the exact limit where eloquence ends, and poetry begins; nor is there any occaſion for being very preciſe about the boundaries, as long as the nature of each is underſtood. Theſe are the minutiæ of criticiſm, concerning which, frivolous writers are always diſpoſed to ſquabble; but which deſerve not any particular diſcuſſion. The truth and juſtneſs of the definition, which I have given of poetry, will appear more fully from the account which I am now to give of its origin; and which will tend to throw light on much of what I am afterwards to deliver, concerning its various kinds.

The Greeks, ever fond of attributing to their own nation the invention of all ſciences and arts, have aſcribed the origin of poetry to Orpheus, Linus, and Muſæus. There were, perhaps, ſuch perſons as theſe, who were the firſt diſtinguiſhed bards in the Grecian countries. But long before ſuch names were heard of, and among nations where they were never known, poetry exiſted. It is a great error to imagine, that poetry and muſic are arts which belong only to poliſhed nations. They have

have their foundation in the nature of man, and belong to all nations, and to all ages; though, like other arts founded in nature, they have been more cultivated, and, from a concurrence of favourable circumstances, carried to greater perfection in some countries than in others. In order to explore the rise of poetry, we must have recourse to the deserts and the wilds; we must go back to the age of hunters and of shepherds; to the highest antiquity; and to the simplest form of manners among mankind.

It has been often said, and the concurring voice of all antiquity affirms, that poetry is older than prose. But in what sense this seemingly strange paradox holds true, has not always been well understood. There never, certainly, was any period of society, in which men conversed together in poetical numbers. It was in very humble and scanty prose, as we may easily believe, that the first tribes carried on intercourse among themselves, relating to the wants and necessities of life. But from the very beginning of society, there were occasions on which they met together for feasts, sacrifices, and public assemblies; and on all such occasions, it is well known, that music, song, and dance, made their principal entertainment. It is chiefly in America, that we have had the opportunity of being made acquainted with men in their savage state. We learn from the particular and concurring accounts of travellers, that among all the nations of that vast continent, especially among the northern tribes, with whom we have had most intercourse, music and song are, at all their meetings, carried on with an incredible degree of enthusiasm; that the chiefs of the tribe are those who signalize themselves most on such occasions; that it is in songs they celebrate their religious rites; that, by these they lament their public and private calamities, the death of friends, or the loss of warriors; express their joy on their victories; celebrate the great actions of their nation, and their heroes; excite each other to perform brave exploits in war, or to suffer death and torments with unshaken constancy.

Here then we see the first beginnings of poetic composition, in those rude effusions, which the enthusiasm of fancy or passion suggested to untaught men, when roused by interesting events, and by their meeting together in public assemblies. Two

particulars

particulars would early distinguish this language of song, from that in which they conversed on the common occurrences of life; namely, an unusual arrangement of words, and the employment of bold figures of speech. It would invert words, or change them from that order in which they are commonly placed, to that which most suited the train in which they rose in the speaker's imagination; or which was most accommodated to the cadence of the passion by which he was moved. Under the influence too of any strong emotion, objects do not appear to us such as they really are, but such as passion makes us see them. We magnify and exaggerate; we seek to interest all others in what causes our emotion; we compare the least things to the greatest; we call upon the absent as well as the present, and even address ourselves to things inanimate. Hence, in congruity with those various movements of the mind, arise those turns of expression, which we now distinguish by the learned names of Hyperbole, Prosopopœia, Simile, &c. but which are no other than the native original language of poetry, among the most barbarous nations.

Man is both a poet and a musician by nature. The same impulse which prompted the enthusiastic poetic style, prompted a certain melody, or modulation of sound, suited to the emotions of joy or grief, of admiration, love, or anger. There is a power in sound, which, partly from nature, partly from habit and association, makes such pathetic impressions on the fancy, as delight even the most wild barbarians. Music and poetry, therefore, had the same rise; they were prompted by the same occasions; they were united in song; and, as long as they continued united, they tended, without doubt, mutually to heighten and exalt each other's power. The first poets sung their own verses; and hence the beginning of what we call, Versification, or words arranged in a more artful order than prose, so as to be suited to some tune or melody. The liberty of transposition, or inversion, which the poetic style, as I observed, would naturally assume, made it easier to form the words into some sort of numbers that fell in with the music of the song. Very harsh and uncouth, we may easily believe, these numbers would be at first. But the pleasure was felt; it was studied; and versification, by degrees, passed into an art.

It

It appears from what has been ſaid, that the firſt compoſitions, which were either recorded by writing, or tranſmitted by tradition, could be no other than poetical compoſitions. No other but theſe, could draw the attention of men in their rude uncivilized ſtate. Indeed, they knew no other. Cool reaſoning, and plain diſcourſe, had no power to attract ſavage tribes, addicted only to hunting and war. There was nothing that could either rouſe the ſpeaker to pour himſelf forth, or draw the crowd to liſten, but the high powers of paſſion, of muſic, and of ſong. This vehicle, therefore, and no other, could be employed by chiefs and legiſlators, when they meant to inſtruct or to animate their tribes. There is, likewiſe, a farther reaſon why ſuch compoſitions only could be tranſmitted to poſterity; becauſe, before writing was invented, ſongs only could laſt, and be remembered. The ear gave aſſiſtance to the memory, by the help of numbers; fathers repeated and ſung them to their children; and by this oral tradition of national ballads, was conveyed all the hiſtorical knowledge, and all the inſtruction of the firſt ages.

The earlieſt accounts which hiſtory gives us concerning all nations, bear teſtimony to theſe facts. In the firſt ages of Greece, prieſts, philoſophers, and ſtateſmen, all delivered their inſtructions in poetry. Apollo, Orpheus, and Amphion, their moſt ancient bards, are repreſented as the firſt tamers of mankind, the firſt founders of law and civilization. Minos and Thales ſung to the lyre the laws which they compoſed;* and till the age immediately preceding that of Herodotus, hiſtory had appeared in no other form than that of poetical tales.

In the ſame manner, among all other nations, poems and ſongs are the firſt objects that make their appearance. Among the Scythian or Gothic nations, many of their kings and leaders were ſcalders, or poets; and it is from their Runic ſongs, that the moſt early writers of their hiſtory, ſuch as Saxo-Grammaticus, acknowledge, that they had derived their chief information. Among the Celtic tribes in Gaul, Britain, and Ireland, we know in what admiration their bards were held, and how great influence they poſſeſſed over the people. They were both poets and muſicians, as all the firſt poets in every country were.

They

* Strabo, l. 10.

They were always near the person of the chief or sovereign; they recorded all his great exploits; they were employed as the ambassadors between contending tribes, and their persons were held sacred.

From this deduction it follows, that as we have reason to look for poems and songs among the antiquities of all countries, so we may expect, that in the strain of these there will be a remarkable resemblance, during the primitive periods of every country. The occasions of their being composed, are every where nearly the same. The praises of gods and heroes, the celebration of famed ancestors, the recital of martial deeds, songs of victory, and songs of lamentation over the misfortunes and death of their countrymen, occur among all nations; and the same enthusiasm and fire, the same wild and irregular, but animated composition, concise and glowing style, bold and extravagant figures of speech, are the general distinguishing characters of all the most ancient original poetry. That strong hyperbolical manner, which we have been long accustomed to call the oriental manner of poetry, (because some of the earliest poetical productions came to us from the east) is in truth no more oriental than occidental; it is characteristical of an age rather than of a country; and belongs, in some measure, to all nations at that period which first gives rise to music and to song. Mankind never resemble each other so much as they do in the beginnings of society. Its subsequent revolutions give birth to the principal distinctions of character among nations, and divert into channels widely separated, that current of human genius and manners, which descends originally from one spring.

Diversity of climate, and of manner of living, will, however, occasion some diversity in the strain of the first poetry of nations; chiefly according as those nations are of a more ferocious, or of a more gentle spirit; and according as they advance faster or slower in the arts of civilization. Thus we find all the remains of the ancient Gothic poetry remarkably fierce, and breathing nothing but slaughter and blood; while the Peruvian and the Chinese songs turned, from the earliest times, upon milder subjects. The Celtic poetry, in the days of Ossian, though chiefly of the martial kind, yet had attained a considerable mixture of tenderness and refinement; in consequence of the long

cultivation of poetry among the Celtæ, by means of a ſeries and ſucceſſion of bards which had been eſtabliſhed for ages. So Lucan informs us:

Vos quoque qui fortes animos, belloque peremptos
Laudibus in longum vates diffunditis ævum,
Plurima ſecuri fudiſtis carmina bardi.* [L. 44.]

Among the Grecian nations, their early poetry appears to have ſoon received a philoſophical caſt, from what we are informed concerning the ſubjects of Orpheus, Linus, and Muſæus, who treated of creation and of chaos, of the generation of the world, and of the riſe of things; and we know that the Greeks advanced ſooner to philoſophy, and proceeded with a quicker pace in all the arts of refinement, than moſt other nations.

The Arabians and the Perſians have always been the greateſt poets of the eaſt; and among them, as among other nations, poetry was the earlieſt vehicle of all their learning and inſtruction.† The ancient Arabs, we are informed,‡ valued themſelves much on their metrical compoſitions, which were of two ſorts; the one they compared to looſe pearls, and the other to pearls ſtrung. In the former, the ſentences or verſes were without connexion; and their beauty aroſe from the elegance of the expreſſion, and the acuteneſs of the ſentiment. The moral doctrines of the Perſians were generally comprehended in ſuch independent proverbial apothegms, formed into verſe. In this reſpect they bear a conſiderable reſemblance to the Proverbs of Solomon; a great part of which book conſiſts of unconnected poetry, like the looſe pearls of the Arabians. The ſame form of compoſition appears alſo in the Book of Job. The Greeks ſeem to have been the firſt who introduced a more regular ſtructure, and cloſer connexion of parts, into their poetical writings.

During

* You too, ye bards, whom ſacred raptures fire
To chaunt your heroes to your country's lyre,
Who conſecrate in your immortal ſtrain,
Brave patriot ſouls in righteous battle ſlain;
Securely now the uſeful taſk renew,
And nobleſt themes in deathleſs ſongs purſue. ROWE.

† Vid. Voyages de Chardin, chap. de la Poëſie des Perſans.

‡ Vid. Preliminary Diſcourſe to Sale's Tranſlation of the Koran.

During the infancy of poetry, all the different kinds of it lay confused, and were mingled in the same composition, according as inclination, enthusiasm, or casual incidents, directed the poet's strain. In the progress of society and arts, they began to assume those different regular forms, and to be distinguished by those different names under which we now know them. But in the first rude state of poetical effusions, we can easily discern the seeds and beginnings of all the kinds of regular poetry. Odes and hymns of every sort, would naturally be among the first compositions; according as the bards were moved by religious feelings, by exultation, resentment, love, or any other warm sentiment, to pour themselves forth in song. Plaintive or elegiac poetry, would as naturally arise from lamentations over their deceased friends. The recital of the achievements of their heroes, and their ancestors, gave birth to what we now call epic poetry; and as, not content with simply reciting these, they would infallibly be led, at some of their public meetings, to represent them, by introducing different bards speaking in the character of their heroes, and answering each other, we find in this the first outlines of tragedy, or dramatic writing.

None of these kinds of poetry, however, were in the first ages of society properly distinguished or separated, as they are now, from each other. Indeed, not only were the different kinds of poetry then mixed together, but all that we now call letters, or composition of any kind, was then blended in one mass. At first, history, eloquence, and poetry, were all the same. Whoever wanted to move or to persuade, to inform or to entertain his countrymen and neighbours, whatever was the subject, accompanied his sentiments and tales with the melody of song. This was the case in that period of society, when the character and occupations of the husbandman and the builder, the warrior and the statesman, were united in one person. When the progress of society brought on a separation of the different arts and professions of civil life, it led also by degrees to a separation of the different literary provinces from each other.

The art of writing was in process of time invented; records of past transactions began to be kept; men, occupied with the subjects of policy and useful arts, wished now to be instructed, and informed, as well as moved. They reasoned and reflected

upon

upon the affairs of life; and were interested by what was real, not fabulous, in past transactions. The historian, therefore, now laid aside the buskins of poetry; he wrote in prose, and attempted to give a faithful and judicious relation of former events. The philosopher addressed himself chiefly to the understanding. The orator studied to persuade by reasoning, and retained more or less of the ancient passionate and glowing style, according as it was conducive to his purpose. Poetry became now a separate art, calculated chiefly to please, and confined generally to such subjects as related to the imagination and passions. Even its earliest companion, music, was in a great measure divided from it.

These separations brought all the literary arts into a more regular form, and contributed to the exact and accurate cultivation of each. Poetry, however, in its ancient original condition, was perhaps more vigorous than it is in its modern state. It included then, the whole burst of the human mind; the whole exertion of its imaginative faculties. It spoke then the language of passion, and no other; for to passion, it owed its birth. Prompted and inspired by objects, which to him seemed great, by events which interested his country or his friends, the early bard arose and sung. He sung indeed in wild and disorderly strains; but they were the native effusions of his heart; they were the ardent conceptions of admiration or resentment, of sorrow or friendship, which he poured forth. It is no wonder, therefore, that in the rude and artless strain of the first poetry of all nations, we should often find somewhat that captivates and transports the mind. In after ages, when poetry became a regular art, studied for reputation and for gain, authors began to affect what they did not feel. Composing coolly in their closets, they endeavoured to imitate passion, rather than to express it; they tried to force their imagination into raptures, or to supply the defect of native warmth, by those artificial ornaments which might give composition a splendid appearance.

The separation of music from poetry, produced consequences not favourable in some respects to poetry, and in many respects hurtful to music.* As long as they remained united, music enlivened

* See Dr. Brown's Dissertation on the *Rise, Union, and Separation of Poetry and Music.*

livened and animated poetry, and poetry gave force and expreſ-ſion to muſical ſound. The muſic of that early period was, beyond doubt, extremely ſimple; and muſt have conſiſted chief-ly of ſuch pathetic notes, as the voice could adapt to the words of the ſong. Muſical inſtruments, ſuch as flutes, and pipes, and a lyre with a very few ſtrings, appear to have been early invented among ſome nations; but no more was intended by theſe inſtruments, than ſimply to accompany the voice, and to heighten the melody of ſong. The poet's ſtrain was always heard; and, from many circumſtances, it appears that among the ancient Greeks, as well as among other nations, the bard ſung his verſes, and played upon his harp or lyre at the ſame time. In this ſtate, the art of muſic was, when it produced all thoſe great effects, of which we read ſo much in ancient ſto-ry. And certain it is, that from ſimple muſic only, and from muſic accompanied with verſe or ſong, we are to look for ſtrong expreſſion, and powerful influence over the human mind. When inſtrumental muſic came to be ſtudied as a ſeparate art, diveſt-ed of the poet's ſong, and formed into the artificial and intri-cate combinations of harmony, it loſt all its ancient power of inflaming the hearers with ſtrong emotions; and ſunk into an art of mere amuſement, among poliſhed and luxurious nations.

Still, however, poetry preſerves, in all countries, ſome re-mains of its firſt and original connexion with muſic. By be-ing uttered in ſong, it was formed into numbers, or into an artificial arrangement of words and ſyllables, very different in different countries; but ſuch, as to the inhabitants of each, ſeemed moſt melodious and agreeable in ſound. Whence ariſes that great characteriſtic of poetry which we now call verſe; a ſubject which comes next to be treated of.

It is a ſubject of a curious nature; but as I am ſenſible, that were I to purſue it as far as my inclination leads, it would give riſe to diſcuſſions, which the greater part of readers would conſider as minute, I ſhall confine myſelf to a few obſervations upon Engliſh verſification.

ions, whoſe language and pronunciation were of a mu-ical kind, reſted their verſification chiefly upon the quantities, is, the length or ſhortneſs of their ſyllables. Others, who not make the quantities of their ſyllables be ſo diſtinctly ceived in pronouncing them, reſted the melody of their

verſe

verse upon the number of syllables it contained, upon the proper disposition of accents and pauses in it, and frequently upon that return of corresponding sounds, which we call rhyme. The former was the case with the Greeks and Romans; the latter is the case with us, and with most modern nations. Among the Greeks and Romans, every syllable, or the far greatest number at least, was known to have a fixed and determined quantity; and their manner of pronouncing rendered this so sensible to the ear, that a long syllable was counted precisely equal in time to two short ones. Upon this principle, the number of syllables contained in their hexameter verse was allowed to vary. It may extend to 17; it can contain, when regular, no fewer than 13: but the musical time was, notwithstanding, precisely the same in every hexameter verse, and was always equal to that of 12 long syllables. In order to ascertain the regular time of every verse, and the proper mixture and succession of long and short syllables which ought to compose it, were invented, what the grammarians call metrical feet, dactyles, spondees, iambus, &c. By these measures was tried the accuracy of composition in every line, and whether it was so constructed as to fulfil its proper melody. It was requisite, for instance, that the hexameter verse should have the quantity of its syllables so disposed, that it could be scanned or measured by six metrical feet, which might be either dactyles or spondees, (as the musical time of both these is the same) with this restriction only, that the fifth foot was regularly to be a dactyle, and the last a spondee.* The

* Some writers imagine, that the feet in Latin verse were intended to correspond to bars in music, and to form musical intervals or distinctions, sensible to the ear in the pronunciation of the line. Had this been the case, every kind of verse must have had a peculiar order of feet appropriated to it. But the common prosodies show, that there are several forms of Latin verse which are capable of being measured indifferently, by a series of feet of very different kinds. For instance, what is called the Asclepedæan verse (in which the first ode of Horace is written) may be scanned either by a Spondeus, two Choriambus's, and a Pyrrichius: or by a Spondeus, a Dactylus succeeded by a Cæsura, and two Dactylus's. The common Pentameter, and some other forms of verse, admit the like varieties; and yet the melody of the verse remains always the same, though it be scanned by different feet. This proves, that the metrical feet were not sensible in the pronunciation of the line, but were intended only to regulate its construction; or applied as measures, to try whether the succession of long and short syllables was such as suited the melody of the verse: and as feet of different kinds could sometimes be applied for this purpose, hence it happened, that some forms of verse were capable of being scanned in different ways. For measuring the hexameter line, no other feet were found so proper as Dactyles and Spondees, and therefore by these it is uniformly scanned. But no ear is sensible of the termination of each foot, in reading an hexameter line. From a misapprehension of this matter, I apprehend that confusion has sometimes arisen among writers, in treating of the prosody both of Latin, and of English Verse.

The introduction of theſe feet into Engliſh verſe, would be altogether out of place; for the genius of our language correſponds not in this reſpect to the Greek or Latin. I ſay not, that we have no regard to quantity, or to long and ſhort, in pronouncing. Many words we have, eſpecially our words conſiſting of ſeveral ſyllables, where the quantity, or the long and ſhort ſyllables, are invariably fixed; but great numbers we have alſo, where the quantity is left altogether looſe. This is the caſe with a great part of our words conſiſting of two ſyllables, and with almoſt all our monoſyllables. In general, the difference made between long and ſhort ſyllables, in our manner of pronouncing them is ſo very inconſiderable, and ſo much liberty is left us for making them either long or ſhort at pleaſure, that mere quantity is of very little effect in Engliſh verſification. The only perceptible difference among our ſyllables, ariſes from ſome of them being uttered with that ſtronger percuſſion of voice, which we call accent. This accent does not always make the ſyllable longer, but gives it more force of ſound only; and it is upon a certain order and ſucceſſion of accented and unaccented ſyllables, infinitely more than upon their being long or ſhort, that the melody of our verſe depends. If we take any of Mr. Pope's lines, and in reciting them alter the quantity of the ſyllables, as far as our quantities are ſenſible, the muſic of the verſe will not be much injured: whereas, if we do not accent the ſyllables according as the verſe dictates, its melody will be totally deſtroyed.*

Our Engliſh heroic verſe is of what may be called an iambic ſtructure; that is, compoſed of a ſucceſſion nearly alternate of ſyllables, not ſhort and long, but unaccented and accented. With regard to the place of theſe accents, however, ſome liberty is admitted, for the ſake of variety. Very often, though not always, the line begins with an unaccented ſyllable; and ſometimes, in the courſe of it, two unaccented ſyllables follow each

other.

* See this well illuſtrated in Lord Monboddo's Treatiſe of *The Origin and Progreſs of Language*, Vol. II. under the head of the proſody of language. He ſhows that this is not only the conſtitution of our own verſe, but that, by our manner of reading Latin verſe, we make its muſic nearly the ſame. For we certainly do not pronounce it according to the ancient quantities, ſo as to make the muſical time of one long ſyllable equal to two ſhort ones; but according to a ſucceſſion of accented and unaccented ſyllables, only mixed in a ratio different from that of our own verſe. No Roman could poſſibly underſtand our pronunciation.

other. But, in general, there are either five, or four, accented ſyllables in each line. The number of ſyllables is ten, unleſs where an Alexandrian verſe is occaſionally admitted. In verſes not Alexandrian, inſtances occur where the line appears to have more than the limited number. But in ſuch inſtances, I apprehend it will be found, that ſome of the liquid ſyllables are ſo ſlurred in pronouncing, as to bring the verſe, with reſpect to its effect upon the ear, within the uſual bounds.

Another eſſential circumſtance in the conſtitution of our verſe, is the cæſural pauſe, which falls towards the middle of each line. Some pauſe of this kind, dictated by the melody, is found in the verſe of moſt nations. It is found, as might be ſhown, in the Latin hexameter. In the French heroic verſe it is very ſenſible. That is a verſe of twelve ſyllables; and in every line, juſt after the ſixth ſyllable, there falls regularly and indiſpenſably, a cæſural pauſe, dividing the line into two equal hemiſtichs. For example, in the firſt lines of Boileau's epiſtle to the king:

Jeune & vaillant heros | dont la haute ſageſſe
N'eſt point le fruit tardif | d'une lente vieilleſſe,
Qui ſeul ſans Miniſtre | à l'exemple des Dieux
Soutiens tout par toi même | & vois tous par tes yeux.

In this train all their verſes proceed; the one half of the line always anſwering to the other, and the ſame chime returning inceſſantly on the ear without intermiſſion or change; which is certainly a defect in their verſe, and unfits it ſo very much for the freedom and dignity of heroic poetry. On the other hand, it is a diſtinguiſhing advantage of our Engliſh verſe, that it allows the pauſe to be varied through four different ſyllables in the line. The pauſe may fall after the 4th, the 5th, the 6th, or the 7th ſyllable; and according as the pauſe is placed after one or other of theſe ſyllables, the melody of the verſe is much changed, its air and cadence are diverſified. By this means, uncommon richneſs and variety are added to Engliſh verſification.

When the pauſe falls earlieſt, that is, after the 4th ſyllable, the briſkeſt melody is thereby formed, and the moſt ſpirited air given to the line. In the following lines of the Rape of the

Lock,

Lock, Mr. Pope has, with exquisite propriety, suited the construction of the verse to the subject.

On her white breast | a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss | and infidels adore;
Her lively looks | a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes | and as unfix'd as those.
Favours to none | to all she smiles extends,
Oft she rejects | but never once offends.

When the pause falls after the 5th syllable, which divides the line into two equal portions, the melody is sensibly altered. The verse loses that brisk and sprightly air, which it had with the former pause, and becomes more smooth, gentle and flowing.

Eternal sunshine | of the spotless mind,
Each prayer accepted | and each wish resign'd.

When the pause proceeds to follow the 6th syllable, the tenor of the music becomes solemn and grave. The verse marches now with a more slow and measured pace, than in any of the two former cases.

The wrath of Peleus' son | the direful spring
Of all the Grecian woes | O Goddess sing!

But the grave, solemn cadence becomes still more sensible, when the pause falls after the 7th syllable, which is the nearest place to the end of the line that it can occupy. This kind of verse occurs the seldomest, but has a happy effect in diversifying the melody. It produces that slow Alexandrian air, which is finely suited to a close; and for this reason, such lines almost never occur together, but are used in finishing the couplet.

And in the smooth description | murmur still,
Long lov'd ador'd ideas! | all adieu.

I have taken my examples from verses in rhyme; because in these, our versification is subjected to the strictest law. As blank verse is of a freer kind, and naturally is read with less cadence or tone, the pauses in it, and the effect of them, are not always so sensible to the ear. It is constructed, however, entirely upon the same principles with respect to the place of the pause. There are some, who, in order to exalt the

variety and the power of our heroic verse, have maintained that it admits of musical pauses, not only after those four syllables, where I assigned their place, but after any one syllable in the verse indifferently, where the sense directs it to be placed. This, in my opinion, is the same thing as to maintain that there is no pause at all belonging to the natural melody of the verse; since, according to this notion, the pause is formed entirely by the meaning, not by the music. But this I apprehend to be contrary both to the nature of versification, and to the experience of every good ear.* Those certainly are the happiest lines, wherein the pause, prompted by the melody, coincides in some degree with that of the sense, or at least does not tend to spoil or interrupt the meaning. Wherever any opposition between the music and the sense chances to take place, I observed before, in treating of pronunciation or delivery, that the proper method of reading these lines, is to read them according as the sense dictates, neglecting or slurring the cæsural pause; which renders the line less graceful indeed, but, however, does not entirely destroy its sound.

Our blank verse possesses great advantages, and is indeed a noble, bold, and disencumbered species of versification. The principal defect in rhyme, is the full close which it forces upon the ear, at the end of every couplet. Blank verse is freed from this; and allows the lines to run into each other with as great liberty as the Latin hexameter permits, perhaps with greater. Hence it is particularly suited to subjects of dignity and force, which demand more free and manly numbers than rhyme. The constraint and strict regularity of rhyme are unfavourable to the sublime, or to the highly pathetic strain. An epic poem, or a tragedy, would be fettered and degraded by it. It is best adapted to compositions of a temperate strain, where no partic-

ular

* In the Italian heroic verse, employed by Tasso in his Gierusalemme, and Ariosto in his Orlando, the pauses are of the same varied nature with those which I have shown to belong to English versification, and fall after the same four syllables in the line. Marmontel, in his Poëtique Françoise, vol. i. p. 269, takes notice, that this construction of verse is common to the Italians and the English; and defends the uniformity of the French cæsural pause upon this ground, that the alteration of masculine and feminine rhymes, furnishes sufficient variety to the French poetry; whereas the change of movement occasioned by the four different pauses in English and Italian verse, produces, according to him, too great diversity. On the head of pauses in English versification, see the Elements of Criticism, chap. 18. sect. 4.

ular vehemence is required in the sentiments, nor great sublimity in the style; such as pastorals, elegies, epistles, satires, &c. To these, it communicates that degree of elevation which is proper for them; and without any other assistance sufficiently distinguishes the style from prose. He who should write such poems in blank verse, would render his work harsh and unpleasing. In order to support a poetical style, he would be obliged to affect a pomp of language unsuitable to the subject.

Though I join in opinion with those, who think that rhyme finds its proper place in the middle, but not in the higher regions of poetry, I can by no means join in the invectives which some have poured out against it, as if it were a mere barbarous gingling of sounds, fit only for children, and owing to nothing but the corruption of taste in the monkish ages. Rhyme might indeed be barbarous in Latin or Greek verse, because these languages, by the sonorousness of their words, by their liberty of transposition and inversion, by their fixed quantities and musical pronunciation, could carry on the melody of verse without its aid. But it does not follow, that therefore it must be barbarous in the English language, which is destitute of these advantages. Every language has powers and graces, and music peculiar to itself; and what is becoming in one, would be ridiculous in another. Rhyme was barbarous in Latin; and an attempt to construct English verses, after the form of hexameters, and pentameters, and sapphics, is as barbarous among us. It is not true, that rhyme is merely a monkish invention. On the contrary, it has obtained under different forms, in the versification of most known nations. It is found in the ancient poetry of the northern nations of Europe; it is said to be found among the Arabs, the Persians, the Indians, and the Americans. This shows that there is something in the return of similar sounds, which is grateful to the ears of most part of mankind. And if any one, after reading Mr. Pope's Rape of the Lock, or Eloisa to Abelard, shall not admit our rhyme, with all its varieties of pauses, to carry both elegance and sweetness of sound, his ear must be pronounced to be of a very peculiar kind.

The present form of our English heroic rhyme in couplets, is a modern species of versification. The measure generally used in the days of Queen Elizabeth, King James, and King Charles

I.

I. was the ſtanza of eight lines, ſuch as Spencer employs, borrowed from the Italian; a meaſure very conſtrained and artificial. Waller was the firſt who brought couplets into vogue; and Dryden afterwards eſtabliſhed the uſage. Waller firſt ſmoothed our verſe; Dryden perfected it. Mr. Pope's verſification has a peculiar character. It is flowing and ſmooth, in the higheſt degree; far more laboured and correct than that of any who went before him. He introduced one conſiderable change into heroic verſe, by totally throwing aſide the triplets, or three lines rhyming together, in which Mr. Dryden abounded. Dryden's verſification, however, has very great merit; and, like all his productions, has much ſpirit, mixed with careleſſneſs. If not ſo ſmooth and correct as Pope's, it is however more varied and eaſy. He ſubjects himſelf leſs to the rule of cloſing the ſenſe with the couplet; and frequently takes the liberty of making his couplets run into one another, with ſomewhat of the freedom of blank verſe.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXIX.

PASTORAL POETRY. LYRIC POETRY.

In the laſt Lecture, I gave an account of the riſe and progreſs of poetry, and made ſome obſervations on the nature of Engliſh verſification. I now proceed to treat of the chief kinds of poetical compoſition; and of the critical rules that relate to them. I ſhall follow that order which is moſt ſimple and natural; beginning with the leſſer forms of poetry, and aſcending from them to the epic and dramatic, as the moſt dignified. This Lecture ſhall be employed on paſtoral and lyric poetry.

Though I begin with the conſideration of paſtoral poetry, it is not becauſe I conſider it as one of the earlieſt forms of poetical compoſition. On the contrary, I am of opinion that it was not cultivated as a diſtinct ſpecies, or ſubject of writing, until ſociety had advanced in refinement. Moſt authors have indeed indulged the fancy, that becauſe the life which mankind at firſt led was rural, therefore, their firſt poetry was paſtoral, or employed in the celebration of rural ſcenes and objects. I make no doubt, that it would borrow many of its images and alluſions from thoſe natural objects with which men were beſt acquainted; but I make as little doubt, that the calm and tranquil ſcenes of rural felicity were not, by any means, the firſt objects which inſpired that ſtrain of compoſition, which we now call poetry. It was inſpired, in the firſt periods of every nation, by events and objects which rouſed men's paſſions; or, at leaſt, awakened their wonder and admiration. The actions of their gods and heroes, their own exploits in war, the ſucceſſes or misfortunes of their countrymen and friends, furniſhed the firſt themes to the bards of every country. What was of a paſtoral kind in their compoſitions, was incidental only. They did not think of chooſing for their theme the tranquillity and the pleaſures of the country, as long as theſe were daily and familiar objects to them. It was not till men had begun

gun to be aſſembled in great cities, after the diſtinctions of rank and ſtation were formed, and the buſtle of courts and large ſocieties was know, that paſtoral poetry aſſumed its preſent form. Men then began to look back upon the more ſimple and innocent life, which their forefathers led, or which, at leaſt, they fancied them to have led: they looked back upon it with pleaſure, and in thoſe rural ſcenes, and paſtoral occupations, imagining a degree of felicity to take place, ſuperior to what they now enjoyed, conceived the idea of celebrating it in poetry. It was in the court of King Ptolemy, that Theocritus wrote the firſt paſtorals with which we are acquainted; and, in the court of Auguſtus, he was imitated by Virgil.

But whatever may have been the origin of paſtoral poetry, it is, undoubtedly, a natural, and very agreeable form of poetical compoſition. It recals to our imagination thoſe gay ſcenes, and pleaſing views of nature, which commonly are the delight of our childhood and youth; and to which, in more advanced years, the greateſt part of men recur with pleaſure. It exhibits to us a life, with which we are accuſtomed to aſſociate the ideas of peace, of leiſure, and of innocence; and, therefore, we readily ſet open our heart to ſuch repreſentations as promiſe to baniſh from our thoughts the cares of the world, and to tranſport us into calm Elyſian regions. At the ſame time, no ſubject bids fairer for being favourable to poetry. Amidſt rural objects, nature preſents, on all hands, the fineſt field for deſcription; and nothing appears to flow more, of its own accord, into poetical numbers, than rivers and mountains, meadows and hills, flocks and trees, and ſhepherds void of care. Hence, this ſpecies of poetry has, at all times, allured many readers, and excited many writers. But, notwithſtanding the advantages it poſſeſſes, it will appear, from what I have farther to obſerve upon it, that there is hardly any ſpecies of poetry which is more difficult to be carried to perfection, or in which fewer writers have excelled.

Paſtoral life may be conſidered in three different views; either ſuch as it now actually is; when the ſtate of ſhepherds is reduced to be a mean, ſervile, and laborious ſtate; when their employments are become diſagreeable, and their ideas groſs and low: or ſuch as we may ſuppoſe it once to have been, in the more early and ſimple ages, when it was a life of eaſe and abundance; when the wealth of men conſiſted chiefly in flocks and

herds,

herds, and the ſhepherd, though unrefined in his manners, was reſpectable in his ſtate; or, laſtly, ſuch as it never was, and never can in reality be, when, to the eaſe, innocence, and ſimplicity of the early ages, we attempt to add the poliſhed taſte, and cultivated manners, of modern times. Of theſe three ſtates, the firſt is too groſs and mean, the laſt too refined and unnatural, to be made the ground-work of paſtoral poetry. Either of theſe extremes is a rock upon which the poet will ſplit, if he approaches too near it. We ſhall be diſguſted if he gives us too much of the ſervile employments, and low ideas of actual peaſants, as Theocritus is cenſured for having ſometimes done; and if, like ſome of the French and Italian writers of paſtorals, he makes his ſhepherds diſcourſe as if they were courtiers and ſcholars, he then retains the name only, but wants the ſpirit of paſtoral poetry.

He muſt, therefore, keep in the middle ſtation between theſe. He muſt form to himſelf the idea of a rural ſtate, ſuch as in certain periods of ſociety may have actually taken place, where there was eaſe, equality, and innocence; where ſhepherds were gay and agreeable, without being learned or refined; and plain and artleſs, without being groſs and wretched. The great charm of paſtoral poetry ariſes, from the view which it exhibits of the tranquillity and happineſs of a rural life. This pleaſing illuſion, therefore, the poet muſt carefully maintain. He muſt diſplay, to us, all that is agreeable in that ſtate, but hide whatever is diſpleaſing.* Let him paint its ſimplicity and innocence to the full;

* In the following beautiful lines of the firſt eclogue, Virgil has, in the true ſpirit of a paſtoral poet, brought together as agreeable an aſſemblage of images of rural pleaſure as can any where be found.

Fortunate ſenex! hic inter flumina nota,
Et fontes ſacros, frigus captabis opacum.
Hinc tibi, quæ ſemper vicino ab limite ſepes,
Hyblæis apibus, florem depaſta ſalicti,
Sæpe levi ſomnum ſuadebit inire ſuſurro.
Hinc altâ ſub rupe, canit frondator ad auras:
Nec tamen interea, raucæ, tua cura, palumbes,
Nec gemere aëriâ ceſſabit turtur ab ulmo.

Happy old man! here mid th' accuſtom'd ſtreams
And ſacred ſprings, you'll ſhun the ſcorching beams;
While from yon willow fence, thy paſtures bound,
The bees that ſuck their flowery ſtores around,
Shall ſweetly mingle, with the whiſp'ring boughs,
Their lulling murmurs, and invite repoſe.
While from ſteep rocks the pruner's ſong is heard;
Nor the ſoft cooing dove, thy fav'rite bird,
Meanwhile ſhall ceaſe to breathe her melting ſtrain,
Nor turtles from the aerial elms to plain. WARTON.

full; but cover its rudeness and misery. Distresses, indeed, and anxieties he may attribute to it; for it would be perfectly unnatural to suppose any condition of human life to be without them; but they must be of such a nature, as not to shock the fancy with any thing peculiarly disgusting in the pastoral life. The shepherd may well be afflicted for the displeasure of his mistress, or for the loss of a favourite lamb. It is a sufficient recommendation of any state, to have only such evils as these to deplore. In short, it is the pastoral life somewhat embellished and beautified, at least, seen on its fairest side only, that the poet ought to present to us. But let him take care, that, in embellishing nature, he does not altogether disguise her; or pretend to join with rural simplicity and happiness, such improvements as are unnatural and foreign to it. If it be not exactly real life which he presents to us, it must, however, be somewhat that resembles it. This, in my opinion, is the general idea of pastoral poetry. But, in order to examine it more particularly, let us consider, first, the scenery; next, the characters; and, lastly, the subjects and actions, which this sort of composition should exhibit.

As to the scene, it is clear, that it must always be laid in the country, and much of the poet's merit depends on describing it beautifully. Virgil is, in this respect, excelled by Theocritus, whose descriptions of natural beauties are richer, and more picturesque than those of the other.* In every pastoral, a scene, or

* What rural scenery, for instance, can be painted in more lively colours, than the following description exhibits?

——————ἔν τε βαθείαις
Ἁδείας σχίνοιο χαμευνίσιν ἐκλινθημες
Ἔν τε νεοτμάτοισι γεγαθότες οἰναρέοισι.
Πολλαὶ δ' αμμιν ὑπερθε κατα κρατὸς δονέοντο
Αἴγειροι πτελέαι τε. το δ' ἐγγυθεν ἱερὸν ὑδωρ
Νυμφᾶν εξ ἄντροιο κατειβόμενον κελάρυσδεν.
Τοὶ δὲ ποτι σκιεραῖς ορπδαμνίσιν αἰθαλίωνες
Τεττιγες λαλαγεῦντες ἔχον πόνον. ἁ δ' ὀλολυγων
Τηλόθεν ἐν πυκιναῖσι βάτων τρύζεσκεν ἀκάνθαις·
Ἄειδον κόρυδοι και ἀκανθίδες, ἔστενε τρύγων.
Πωτωντο ξύθαὶ περι πίδακας αμφὶ μέλισσαι.
Πάντ' ὦσδεν θέρεος μάλα πίονος; ωσδε δ' ὀπώρης.
Ὄχναι μὲν παρ ποσσὶ, παρα πλουραῖσι δε μαλα
Δαψιλέως ἄμμιν ἐκυλίνδετο· τοι δ' εκεχυντο
Ὄρπακες βραβύλοισι καταβρίθοντες ἔρασδε.

THEOCRIT. Idyll. vii. 132.

——————on soft beds recline
Of lentisk, and young branches of the vine:
Poplars and elms above, their foliage spread,
Lent a cool shade, and wav'd the breezy head;

Below

or rural prospect, should be distinctly drawn, and set before us. It is not enough, that we have those unmeaning groupes of violets and roses, of birds, and brooks, and breezes, which our common pastoral-mongers throw together, and which are perpetually recurring upon us without variation. A good poet ought to give us such a landscape, as a painter could copy after. His objects must be particularised; the stream, the rock, or the tree, must, each of them, stand forth, so as to make a figure in the imagination, and to give us a pleasing conception of the place where we are. A single object happily introduced, will sometimes distinguish and characterise a whole scene; such as the antique rustic sepulchre, a very beautiful object in a landscape, which Virgil has set before us, and which he has taken from Theocritus:

Hinc adeo media est nobis via; jamque sepulchrum
Incipit apparere Bianoris; hic ubi densas
Agricolæ stringunt frondes———Ecl. IX.*

Not only in professed descriptions of the scenery, but in the frequent allusions to natural objects, which occur, of course, in pastorals, the poet must, above all things, study variety. He must diversify his face of nature, by presenting to us new images; or otherwise, he will soon become insipid with those known topics of description, which were original, it is true, in the first poets, who copied them from nature, but which are now worn thread-bare by incessant imitation. It is also incumbent

Below a stream, from the nymph's sacred cave,
In free meanders led its murmuring wave.
In the warm sunbeams, verdant shades among,
Shrill grasshoppers renew'd their plaintive song:
At distance far, conceal'd in shades, alone,
Sweet Philomela pour'd her tuneful moan:
The lark, the goldfinch, warbled lays of love,
And sweetly pensive coo'd the turtle dove;
While honey bees, forever on the wing,
Humm'd round the flowers, or sipt the silver spring.
The rich, ripe season, gratified the sense
With summer's sweets, and autumn's redolence.
Apples and pears lay strew'd in heaps around,
And the plum's loaded branches kiss'd the ground. Fawkes.

* ———To our mid journey we are come,
I see the top of old Bianor's tomb;
Here, Mœris, where the swains thick branches prune,
And strew their leaves, our voices let us tune. Warton.

bent on him, to suit the scenery to the subject of the pastoral; and, according as it is of a gay or a melancholy kind, to exhibit nature under such forms as may correspond with the emotions or sentiments which he describes. Thus Virgil, in his second eclogue, which contains the lamentation of a despairing lover, gives, with propriety, a gloomy appearance to the scene:

> Tantum inter densas, umbrosa cacumina, fagos,
> Assidue veniebat; ibi hæc incondita solus
> Montibus & sylvis studio jactabat inani.*

With regard to the characters, or persons, which are proper to be introduced into pastorals, it is not enough that they be persons residing in the country. The adventures, or the discourses of courtiers, or citizens, in the country, are not what we look for in such writings; we expect to be entertained by shepherds, or persons wholly engaged in rural occupations; whose innocence and freedom from the cares of the world may, in our imagination, form an agreeable contrast, with the manners and characters of those who are engaged in the bustle of life.

One of the principal difficulties which here occurs has been already hinted; that of keeping the exact medium between too much rusticity on the one hand, and too much refinement on the other. The shepherd, assuredly, must be plain and unaffected in his manner of thinking, on all subjects. An amiable simplicity must be the ground-work of his character. At the same time, there is no necessity for his being dull and insipid. He may have good sense and reflection; he may have sprightliness and vivacity; he may have very tender and delicate feelings; since these are, more or less, the portion of men in all ranks of life; and since, undoubtedly, there was much genius in the world, before there were learning, or arts to refine it. But then he must not subtilise; he must not deal in general reflections and abstract reasoning; and still less in the points and conceits of an affected gallantry, which surely belong not to his character and situation. Some of these conceits are the chief blemishes of the Italian pastorals, which are otherwise beautiful. When Aminta, in Tasso, is disentangling his mistress's hair from a tree to which a savage had bound it, he is represented

* Mid shades of thickest beech he pin'd alone,
To the wild woods and mountains made his moan;
Still day by day, in incoherent strains,
'Twas all he could, despairing told his pains. Warton.

represented as saying: "Cruel tree! how couldst thou injure "that lovely hair which did thee so much honour? thy rug-"ged trunk was not worthy of such lovely knots. What ad-"vantage have the servants of love, if those precious chains "are common to them and to the trees?"* Such strained sentiments as these ill befit the woods. Rural personages are supposed to speak the language of plain sense, and natural feelings. When they describe, or relate, they do it with simplicity, and naturally allude to rural circumstances; as in these beautiful lines of one of Virgil's eclogues:

Sepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala
(Dux ego vester eram) vidi cum matre legentem
Alter ab undecimo tum me jam ceperat annus,
Jam fragiles poteram a terra contingere ramos.
Ut vidi, ut perii, ut me malus abstulit error! †

In another passage, he makes a shepherdess throw an apple at her lover:

Tum fugit ad salices, & se cupit ante videri.‡

This is *naïve*, as the French express it, and perfectly suited to pastoral manners. Mr. Pope wanted to imitate this passage, and, as he thought, to improve upon it. He does it thus:

The sprightly Sylvia trips along the green,
She runs; but hopes she does not run unseen;
While a kind glance at her pursuer flies,
How much at variance are her feet and eyes?

This falls far short of Virgil; the natural and pleasing simplicity of the description is destroyed, by the quaint and affect-ed

* Già di nodi sì bei non era degno
Così rovido tronco; hor, che vantaggio
Hanno i servi d'amor, se lor commune
E'con le piante il pretioso laccio?
Pianta crudel! potesti quel bel crine
Offender, tu, ch'a te feo tanto onore? Atto III. Sc. I.

† Once with your mother to our fields you came
For dewy apples; thence I date my flame;
The choicest fruit I pointed to your view,
Tho' young, my raptur'd soul was fix'd on you;
The boughs I just could reach with little arms;
But then, even then, could feel thy pow'rful charms.
O, how I gaz'd, in pleasing transport tost!
How glow'd my heart, in sweet delusion lost! Warton.

‡ My Phillis me with pelted apples plies;
Then, tripping to the wood, the wanton hies,
And wishes to be seen, before she flies. Dryden.

ed turn in the last line: "How much at variance are her feet "and eyes."

Supposing the poet to have formed correct ideas concerning his pastoral characters and personages; the next inquiry is, about what he is to employ them? and what are to be the subjects of his eclogues? For it is not enough, that he gives us shepherds discoursing together. Every good poem, of every kind, ought to have a subject which would, in some way, interest us. Now, here, I apprehend, lies the chief difficulty of pastoral writing. The active scenes of country life either are, or to most describers appear to be, too barren of incidents. The state of a shepherd, or a person occupied in rural employments only, is exposed to few of those accidents and revolutions which render his situation interesting, or produce curiosity or surprise. The tenor of his life is uniform. His ambition is conceived to be without policy, and his love without intrigue. Hence it is, that, of all poems, the most meagre commonly in the subject, and the least diversified in the strain, is the pastoral. From the first lines, we can, generally, guess at all that is to follow. It is either a shepherd who sits down solitarily by a brook, to lament the absence, or cruelty of his mistress, and to tell us how the trees wither, and the flowers droop, now that she is gone; or we have two shepherds who challenge one another to sing, rehearsing alternate verses, which have little either of meaning or subject, till the judge rewards one with a studded crook, and another with a beechen bowl. To the frequent repetition of common-place topics, of this sort, which have been thrummed over by all eclogue writers since the days of Theocritus and Virgil, is owing much of that insipidity which prevails in pastoral compositions.

I much question, however, whether this insipidity be not owing to the fault of the poets, and to their barren and slavish imitation of the ancient pastoral topics, rather than to the confined nature of the subject. For why may not pastoral poetry take a wider range? Human nature, and human passions, are much the same in every rank of life; and wherever these passions operate on objects that are within the rural sphere, there may be a proper subject for pastoral. One would indeed choose to remove from this sort of composition the operations of vio-

lent and direful paſſions, and to preſent ſuch only as are conſiſtent with innocence, ſimplicity, and virtue. But under this limitation, there will ſtill be abundant ſcope for a careful obſerver of nature to exert his genius. The various adventures which give occaſion to thoſe engaged in country life to diſplay their diſpoſition and temper; the ſcenes of domeſtic felicity or diſquiet; the attachment of friends and of brothers; the rivalſhip and competitions of lovers; the unexpected ſucceſſes or misfortunes of families, might give occaſion to many a pleaſing and tender incident; and were more of the narrative and ſentimental intermixed with the deſcriptive in this kind of poetry, it would become much more intereſting than it now generally is, to the bulk of readers.*

The two great fathers of paſtoral poetry are, Theocritus and Virgil. Theocritus was a Sicilian; and as he has laid the ſcenes of his eclogues in his own country, Sicily became ever afterwards a ſort of conſecrated ground for paſtoral poetry. His Idyllia, as he has entitled them, are not all of equal merit; nor indeed are they all paſtorals; but ſome of them poems of a quite different nature. In ſuch, however, as are properly paſtorals, there are many and great beauties. He is diſtinguiſhed for the ſimplicity of his ſentiments; for the great ſweetneſs and harmony of his numbers, and for the richneſs of his ſcenery and deſcription. He is the original, of which Virgil is the imitator. For moſt of Virgil's higheſt beauties in his eclogues are copied from Theocritus; in many places he has done nothing more than tranſlate them. He muſt be allowed, however, to have imitated him with great judgment, and in ſome reſpects to have improved upon him. For Theocritus, it cannot be denied, deſcends ſometimes into ideas that are groſs and mean, and makes his ſhepherds abuſive and immodeſt; whereas Virgil is free from offenſive ruſticity, and at the ſame time preſerves the character of paſtoral ſimplicity. The ſame diſtinction obtains between Theocritus and Virgil, as between many other of the Greek and Roman writers. The Greek led the way, followed nature more cloſely, and ſhowed

* The above obſervations on the barrenneſs of the common eclogues were written before any tranſlation from the German had made us acquainted in this country with Geſner's Idylls, in which the ideas that had occurred to me for the improvement of paſtoral poetry, are fully realized.

shewed more original genius. The Roman discovered more of the polish and correctness of art. We have a few remains of other two Greek poets in the pastoral style, Moschus and Bion, which have very considerable merit; and if they want the simplicity of Theocritus, excel him in tenderness and delicacy.

The modern writers of pastorals have generally contented themselves with copying, or imitating, the descriptions and sentiments of the ancient poets. Sannazarius, indeed, a famous Latin poet, in the age of Leo X. attempted a bold innovation. He composed piscatory eclogues, changing the scene from woods to the sea, and from the life of shepherds to that of fishermen. But the innovation was so unhappy, that he has gained no followers. For the life of fishermen is, obviously, much more hard and toilsome than that of shepherds, and presents to the fancy much less agreeable images. Flocks, and trees, and flowers are objects of greater beauty, and more generally relished by men, than fishes and marine productions. Of all the moderns, M. Gesner, a poet of Switzerland, has been the most successful in his pastoral compositions. He has introduced into his Idylls (as he entitles them) many new ideas. His rural scenery is often striking, and his descriptions are lively. He presents pastoral life to us, with all the embellishments of which it is susceptible; but without any excess of refinement. What forms the chief merit of this poet is, that he writes to the heart; and has enriched the subject of his Idylls with incidents, which give rise to much tender sentiment. Scenes of domestic felicity are beautifully painted. The mutual affection of husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, as well as of lovers, are displayed in a pleasing and touching manner. From not understanding the language in which M. Gesner writes, I can be no judge of the poetry of his style: but, in the subject and conduct of his pastorals, he appears to me, to have outdone all the moderns.

Neither Mr. Pope's nor Mr. Philips's pastorals, do any great honour to the English poetry. Mr. Pope's were composed in his youth; which may be an apology for other faults, but cannot well excuse the barrenness that appears in them. They are written in remarkably smooth and flowing numbers: and

this is their chief merit; for there is scarcely any thought in them which can be called his own; scarcely any description, or any image of nature, which has the marks of being original, or copied from nature herself; but a repetition of the common images that are to be found in Virgil, and in all poets who write of rural themes. Philips attempted to be more simple and natural than Pope; but he wanted genius to support his attempt, or to write agreeably. He, too, runs on the common and beaten topics; and endeavouring to be simple, he becomes flat and insipid. There was no small competition between these two authors, at the time when their pastorals were published. In some papers of the *Guardian*, great partiality was shown to Philips, and high praise bestowed upon him. Mr. Pope, resenting this preference, under a feigned name procured a paper to be inserted in the *Guardian*, wherein he seemingly carries on the plan of extolling Philips; but in reality satirises him most severely with ironical praises; and in an artful covered manner, gives the palm to himself.* About the same time, Mr. Gay published his Shepherd's Week, in six pastorals, which are designed to ridicule that sort of simplicity which Philips and his partizans extolled, and are, indeed, an ingenious burlesque of pastoral writing, when it rises no higher than the manners of modern clowns and rustics. Mr. Shenstone's Pastoral Ballad, in four parts, may justly be reckoned, I think, one of the most elegant poems of this kind, which we have in English.

I have not yet mentioned one form in which pastoral writing has appeared in latter ages, that is, when extended into a play, or regular drama, where plot, characters, and passions, are joined with the simplicity and innocence of rural manners. This is the chief improvement which the moderns have made on this species of composition; and of this nature, we have two Italian pieces which are much celebrated, Guarini's Pastor Fido, and Tasso's Aminta. Both of these possess great beauties, and are entitled to the reputation they have gained. To the latter, the preference seems due, as being less intricate in the plot and conduct, and less strained and affected in the sentiments; and though not wholly free of Italian refinement (of which I already gave one instance, the worst, indeed, that occurs

* See Guardian, No. 40.

curs in all the poem) it is, on the whole, a performance of high merit. The strain of the poetry is gentle and pleasing; and the Italian language contributes to add much of that softness, which is peculiarly suited to pastoral.*

I must

* It may be proper to take notice here, that the charge against Tasso for his points and conceits, has sometimes been carried too far. Mr. Addison, for instance, in a paper of the Guardian, censuring his Aminta, gives this example, "That Sylvia enters adorned with a garland of flowers, and after viewing herself in a fountain, breaks out in a speech to the flowers on her head, and tells them, that she did not wear them to adorn herself, but to make them ashamed." "Whoever can bear this," he adds, "may be assured, that he has no taste for pastoral." Guard. No. 38. But Tasso's Sylvia, in truth, makes no such ridiculous figure, and we are obliged to suspect that Mr. Addison had not read the Aminta. Daphne, a companion of Sylvia, appears in conversation with Thyrsis, the confidant of Aminta, Sylvia's lover, and in order to shew him, that Sylvia was not so simple, or insensible to her own charms, as she affected to be, gives him this instance; that she had caught her one day adjusting her dress by a fountain, and applying now one flower, and now another to her neck, and after comparing their colours with her own, she broke into a smile, as if she had seemed to say, I will wear you, not for my ornaments, but to shew how much you yield to me: and when caught thus admiring herself, she threw away her flowers, and blushed for shame. This description of the vanity of a rural coquette, is no more than what is natural, and very different from what the Author of the Guardian represents it.

This censure on Tasso was not originally Mr. Addison's. Bouhours, in his *Manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages d'esprit*, appears to have been the first who gave this misrepresentation of Sylvia's speech, and founded a criticism on it. Fontenelle, in his discourse on Pastoral Poetry, followed him in this criticism. Mr. Addison, or whoever was the Author of that Paper in the Guardian, copied from them both. Mr. Warton, in the Prefatory Discourse to his Translation of Virgil's Eclogues, repeats the observation. Sylvia's speech to the flowers, with which she was adorned, is always quoted as the flagrant instance of the false taste of the Italian poets. Whereas, Tasso gives us no such speech of Sylvia's, but only informs us of what her companion supposed her to be thinking, or saying to herself, when she was privately admiring her own beauty. After charging so many eminent critics, for having fallen into this strange inaccuracy, from copying one another, without looking into the author whom they censure, it is necessary for me to insert the passage which has occasioned this remark. Daphne speaks thus to Thyrsis:

Hora, per dirti il ver, non mi resolvo
Si Silvia è semplicetta, come pare
A le parole, agli atti. Hier vidi un segno
Che me ne mette in dubbio. Io la trovai
Là presso la cittade in quei gran prati,
Ove fra stagni grace un' isoletta;
Sovra essa un lago limpido, e tranquillo,
Tutta pendente in atto, che parea
Vagheggiar se medesme, e'nsieme insieme
Chieder consiglio a l'acque, in qual maniera
Dispor dovesse in sù la fronte i crini,
E sovra i crini il velo, e sovra'l velo
I fior, che tenea in grembo; e spesso spesso
Hor prendeva un ligustro, hor una rosa,

E l'accostava

I must not omit the mention of another pastoral drama, which will bear being brought into comparison with any composition of this kind, in any language; that is, Allan Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd. It is a great disadvantage to this beautiful poem, that it is written in the old rustic dialect of Scotland, which, in a short time, will probably be entirely obsolete, and not intelligible; and it is a farther disadvantage, that it is so entirely formed on the rural manners of Scotland, that none but a native of that country can thoroughly understand, or relish it. But, though subject to those local disadvantages, which confine its reputation within narrow limits, it is full of so much natural description, and tender sentiment, as would do honour to any poet. The characters are well drawn, the incidents affecting, the scenery and manners lively and just. It affords a strong proof, both of the power which nature and simplicity possess, to reach the heart in every sort of writing; and of the variety of pleasing characters and subjects, with which pastoral poetry, when properly managed, is capable of being enlivened.

I proceed next, to treat of lyric poetry, or the ode; a species of poetical composition which possesses much dignity, and in which many writers have distinguished themselves, in every age. Its peculiar character is, that it is intended to be sung, or accompanied with music. Its designation implies this. Ode is, in Greek, the same with song or hymn; and lyric poetry imports, that the verses are accompanied with a lyre, or musical instrument. This distinction was not, at the first, peculiar to any one species of poetry. For, as I observed in the last Lecture, music and poetry were coeval, and were, originally, always joined together. But after their separation took place, after

E l'accostava al bel candido collo,
A le guancie vermiglie, e de'colori
Fea paragone; e poi, sicome lieta
De la vittoria, lampeggiava un riso
Che parea che dicesse: io pur vi vinco;
Né porto voi per ornamento mio,
Mà porto voi sol per vergogna vostra;
Perche si veggia quanto mi cedete.
Mà mentre ella s'ornava, e vagheggiava,
Rivolsi gli occhi a caso, e si fù accorta,
Ch'io di lei m'era accorta, e vergognando
Rizzosi tosto, e i fior lasciò cadere;
In tanto io piu ridea del suo rossore,
Ella piu s'arrossia del riso mio. Aminta. Atto II. Sc. ii.

after bards had begun to make verse compositions, which were to be recited or read, not to be sung, such poems as were designed to be still joined with music or song, were, by way of distinction, called odes.

In the ode, therefore, poetry retains its first and most ancient form; that form, under which the original bards poured forth their enthusiastic strains, praised their gods and their heroes, celebrated their victories, and lamented their misfortunes. It is from this circumstance, of the ode's being supposed to retain its original union with music, that we are to deduce the proper idea, and the peculiar qualities of this kind of poetry. It is not distinguished from other kinds, by the subjects on which it is employed; for these may be extremely various. I know no distinction of subject that belongs to it, except that other poems are often employed in the recital of actions, whereas sentiments, of one kind or other, form, almost always, the subject of the ode. But it is chiefly the spirit, the manner of its execution, that marks and characterises it. Music and song naturally add to the warmth of poetry. They tend to transport, in a higher degree, both the person who sings, and the persons who hear. They justify, therefore, a bolder and more passionate strain, than can be supported in simple recitation. On this is formed the peculiar character of the ode. Hence, the enthusiasm that belongs to it, and the liberties it is allowed to take, beyond any other species of poetry. Hence, that neglect of regularity, those digressions, and that disorder which it is supposed to admit; and which, indeed, most lyric poets have not failed sufficiently to exemplify in their practice.

The effects of music upon the mind are chiefly two; to raise it above its ordinary state, and fill it with high enthusiastic emotions; or to soothe, and melt it into the gentle pleasurable feelings. Hence, the ode may either aspire to the former character of the sublime and noble, or it may descend to the latter of the pleasant and the gay; and between these, there is, also, a middle region, of the mild and temperate emotions, which the ode may often occupy to advantage.

All odes may be comprised under four denominations. First, sacred odes; hymns addressed to God, or composed on religious subjects. Of this nature are the Psalms of David, which

which exhibit to us this ſpecies of lyric poetry, in its higheſt degree of perfection. Secondly, heroic odes, which are employed in the praiſe of heroes, and in the celebration of martial exploits and great actions. Of this kind are all Pindar's odes, and ſome few of Horace's. Theſe two kinds ought to have ſublimity and elevation, for their reigning character. Thirdly, moral and philoſophical odes, where the ſentiments are chiefly inſpired by virtue, friendſhip, and humanity. Of this kind, are many of Horace's odes, and ſeveral of our beſt modern lyric productions; and here the ode poſſeſſes that middle region, which, as I obſerved, it ſometimes occupies. Fourthly, feſtive and amorous odes, calculated merely for pleaſure and amuſement. Of this nature, are all Anacreon's, ſome of Horace's; and a great number of ſongs and modern productions, that claim to be of the lyric ſpecies. The reigning character of theſe, ought to be elegance, ſmoothneſs and gaiety.

One of the chief difficulties in compoſing odes, ariſes from that enthuſiaſm which is underſtood to be a characteriſtic of lyric poetry. A profeſſed ode, even of the moral kind, but more eſpecially if it attempt the ſublime, is expected to be enlivened and animated, in an uncommon degree. Full of this idea, the poet, when he begins to write an ode, if he has any real warmth of genius, is apt to deliver himſelf up to it, without control or reſtraint; if he has it not, he ſtrains after it, and thinks himſelf bound to aſſume the appearance, of being all fervour, and all flame. In either caſe, he is in great hazard of becoming extravagant. The licentiouſneſs of writing without order, method, or connexion, has infected the ode more than any other ſpecies of poetry. Hence, in the claſs of heroic odes, we find ſo few that one can read with pleaſure. The poet is out of ſight, in a moment. He gets up into the clouds; becomes ſo abrupt in his tranſitions; ſo eccentric and irregular in his motions, and of courſe ſo obſcure, that we eſſay in vain to follow him, or to partake of his raptures. I do not require, that an ode ſhould be as regular in the ſtructure of its parts, as a didactic, or an epic poem. But ſtill, in every compoſition, there ought to be a ſubject; there ought to be parts which make up a whole; there ſhould be a connexion of thoſe parts with one another. The tranſitions from thought

thought to thought may be light and delicate, such as are prompted by a lively fancy; but still they should be such as preserve the connexion of ideas, and show the author to be one who thinks, and not one who raves. Whatever authority may be pleaded for the incoherence and disorder of lyric poetry, nothing can be more certain, than that any composition which is so irregular in its method, as to become obscure to the bulk of readers, is so much worse upon that account.*

The extravagant liberty which several of the modern lyric writers assume to themselves in their versification, increases the disorder of this species of poetry. They prolong their periods to such a degree, they wander through so many different measures, and employ such a variety of long and short lines, corresponding in rhyme at so great a distance from each other, that all sense of melody is utterly lost. Whereas, lyric composition ought, beyond every other species of poetry, to pay attention to melody and beauty of sound; and the versification of those odes may be justly accounted the best, which renders the harmony of the measure most sensible to every common ear.

Pindar, the great father of lyric poetry, has been the occasion of leading his imitators into some of the defects I have now mentioned. His genius was sublime; his expressions are beautiful and happy; his descriptions, picturesque. But finding it a very barren subject to sing the praises of those who had

* "La plupart de ceux qui parlent de l'enthousiasme de l'ode, en parlent "comme s'ils étoient eux mêmes dans le trouble qu'ils veulent definir. Ce "ne sont que grands mots de fureur divine, de transports de l'âme, de mouve-"mens, de lumières, qui mis bout-à-bout dans des phrases pompeuses, ne "produisent pourtant aucune idée distincte. Si on les en croit, l'essence de "l'enthousiasme est de ne pouvoir être compris que par les esprits du prèmier "ordre, à la tête desquels ils se supposent, et dont ils excluent tous ceux qui "ôsent ne les pas entendre.—Le beau desordre de l'ode est un effet de l'art; "mais il faut prendre garde de donner trop d'étendue à ce terme. On autor-"iseroit parà-la tous les écarts imaginables. Un poëte n'auroit plus qu'à ex-"primer avec force toutes les pensées qui lui viendroient successivement; il "se tiendroit dispensé d'en examiner le rapport, et de se faire un plan, dont "toutes les parties se prêtassent mutuellement des beautiés. Il n'y auroit ni "commencement, ni milieu ni fin dans son ouvrage; et cependant l'auteur "se croiroit d'autant plus sublime, qu'il seroit moins raisonnable. Mais qui "produiroit une pareille composition dans l'esprit du lecteur? Elle ne laisseroit "qu'un ètourdissement, causé par la magnificence et l'harmonie des paroles, "sans y faire naître que des idées confuses, qui chasseroient l'une ou l'autre, au "lieu de concourir ensemble à fixer et à eclairer l'esprit."

Oeuvres de M. De La Motte, Tome I. Discours sur l'Ode.

had gained the prize in the public games, he is perpetually digressive, and fills up his poems with fables of the gods and heroes, that have little connexion either with his subject, or with one another. The ancients admired him greatly; but as many of the histories of particular families and cities, to which he alludes, are now unknown to us, he is so obscure, partly from his subjects, and partly from his rapid, abrupt manner of treating them, that, notwithstanding the beauty of his expression, our pleasure in reading him is much diminished. One would imagine, that many of his modern imitators thought the best way to catch his spirit, was to imitate his disorder and obscurity. In several of the choruses of Euripides and Sophocles, we have the same kind of lyric poetry as in Pindar, carried on with more clearness and connexion, and at the same time with much sublimity.

Of all the writers of odes, ancient or modern, there is none, that, in point of correctness, harmony, and happy expression, can vie with Horace. He has descended from the Pindaric rapture to a more moderate degree of elevation; and joins connected thought, and good sense, with the highest beauties of poetry. He does not often aspire beyond that middle region, which I mentioned as belonging to the ode; and those odes, in which he attempts the sublime, are perhaps not always his best.* The peculiar character, in which he excels, is grace and elegance; and in this style of composition, no poet has ever attained to a greater perfection than Horace. No poet supports a moral sentiment with more dignity, touches a gay one more happily, or possesses the art of trifling more agreeably, when he chooses to trifle. His language is so fortunate, that with a single word or epithet, he often conveys a whole description to the fancy. Hence he has ever been, and ever will continue to be, a favourite author with all persons of taste.

Among the Latin poets of later ages, there have been many imitators of Horace. One of the most distinguished is Casimir, a Polish

* There is no ode whatever of Horace's, without great beauties. But though I may be singular in my opinion, I cannot help thinking that in some of those odes which have been much admired for sublimity, (such as Ode iv. Lib. 4. "Qualem ministrum fulminis alitem," &c.) there appears somewhat of a strained and forced effort to be lofty. The genius of this amiable poet shews itself, according to my judgment, to greater advantage, in themes of a more temperate kind.

a Polish poet of the last century, who wrote four books of odes. In graceful ease of expression, he is far inferior to the Roman. He oftener affects the sublime; and in the attempt, like other lyric writers, frequently becomes harsh and unnatural. But, on several occasions, he discovers a considerable degree of original genius, and poetical fire. Buchanan, in some of his lyric compositions, is very elegant and classical.

Among the French, the Odes of Jean Baptiste Rousseau, have been much, and justly, celebrated. They possess great beauty, both of sentiment and expression. They are animated, without being rhapsodical; and are not inferior to any poetical productions in the French language.

In our own language, we have several lyric compositions of considerable merit. Dryden's ode on St. Cecilia, is well known. Mr. Gray is distinguished in some of his odes, both for tenderness and sublimity; and in Dodsley's Miscellanies, several very beautiful lyric poems are to be found. As to professed Pindaric odes, they are, with a few exceptions, so incoherent, as seldom to be intelligible. Cowley, at all times harsh, is doubly so in his Pindaric compositions. In his Anacreontic odes, he is much happier. They are smooth and elegant; and, indeed, the most agreeable, and the most perfect in their kind, of all Mr. Cowley's poems.

LECTURE

LECTURE XL.

DIDACTIC POETRY. DESCRIPTIVE POETRY.

HAVING treated of paſtoral and lyric poetry, I proceed next to didactic poetry; under which is included a numerous claſs of writings. The ultimate end of all poetry, indeed, of every compoſition, ſhould be to make ſome uſeful impreſſion on the mind. This uſeful impreſſion is moſt commonly made in poetry, by indirect methods; as by fable, by narration, by repreſentation of characters; but didactic poetry openly profeſſes its intention of conveying knowledge and inſtruction. It differs, therefore, in the form only, not in the ſcope and ſubſtance, from a philoſophical, a moral, or a critical treatiſe in proſe. At the ſame time, by means of its form, it has ſeveral advantages over proſe inſtruction. By the charm of verſification and numbers, it renders inſtruction more agreeable; by the deſcriptions, epiſodes, and other embelliſhments, which it may interweave, it detains, and engages the fancy; it fixes alſo uſeful circumſtances more deeply in the memory. Hence, it is a field, wherein a poet may gain great honour, may diſplay both much genius, and much knowledge and judgment.

It may be executed in different manners. The poet may chooſe ſome inſtructive ſubject, and he may treat it regularly, and in form; or, without intending a great or regular work, he may only inveigh againſt particular vices, or make ſome moral obſervations on human life and characters, as is commonly done in ſatires and epiſtles. All theſe come under the denomination of didactic poetry.

The higheſt ſpecies of it, is a regular treatiſe on ſome philoſophical, grave, or uſeful ſubject. Of this nature we have ſeveral, both ancient and modern, of great merit and character: ſuch as Lucretius's ſix books De Rerum Natura, Virgil's Georgics, Pope's Eſſay on Criticiſm, Akenſide's Pleaſures of the Imagination, Armſtrong on Health, Horace's, Vida's, and Boileau's Art of Poetry.

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In all such works, as instruction is the professed object, the fundamental merit consists in sound thought, just principles, clear and apt illustrations. The poet must instruct; but he must study, at the same time, to enliven his instructions, by the introduction of such figures, and such circumstances, as may amuse the imagination, may conceal the dryness of his subject, and embellish it with poetical painting. Virgil, in his Georgics, presents us here with a perfect model. He has the art of raising and beautifying the most trivial circumstances in rural life. When he is going to say, that the labour of the country must be in spring, he expresses himself thus:

Vere novo, gelidus canis cum montibus humor
Liquitur, et Zephyro putris se gleba resolvit;
Depresso incipiat jam tum mihi Taurus aratro
Ingemere, & sulco attritus splendescere vomer.*

Instead of telling his husbandman in plain language, that his crops will fail through bad management, his language is,

Heu magnum alterius frustra spectabis acervum,
Concussaque famem in sylvis solabere quercu.†

Instead of ordering him to water his grounds, he presents us with a beautiful landscape,

Ecce supercilio clivosi tramitis undam
Elicit; illa cadens, raucum per lævia murmur
Saxa ciet; scatebrisque arentia temperat arva.‡

In all didactic works, method and order are essentially requisite; not so strict and formal as in a prose treatise; yet such as

* While yet the spring is young, while earth unbinds
Her frozen bosom to the western winds;
While mountain snows dissolve against the sun,
And streams yet new from precipices run;
Ev'n in this early dawning of the year,
Produce the plough and yoke the sturdy steer,
And goad him till he groans beneath his toil,
Till the bright share is buried in the soil. DRYDEN.

† On other's crops you may with envy look,
And shake for food the long abandon'd oak. DRYDEN.

‡ Behold when burning suns, or Syrius' beams
Strike fiercely on the field, and with'ring stems,
Down from the summit of the neighbouring hills
O'er the smooth stones, he calls the bubbling rills:
Soon as he clears whate'er their passage stay'd,
And marks their future current with his spade,
Before him scattering they prevent his pains,
And roll with hollow murmurs o'er the plains. WARTON.

as may exhibit clearly to the reader a connected train of instruction. Of the didactic poets, whom I before mentioned, Horace in his Art of Poetry, is the one most censured for want of method. Indeed, if Horace be deficient in any thing throughout many of his writings, it is in this, of not being sufficiently attentive to juncture and connexion of parts. He writes always with ease and gracefulness; but often in a manner somewhat loose and rambling. There is, however, in that work much good sense, and excellent criticism; and, if it be considered as intended for the regulation of the Roman drama, which seems to have been the author's chief purpose, it will be found to be a more complete and regular treatise, than under the common notion, of its being a system of the whole poetical art.

With regard to episodes and embellishments, great liberty is allowed to writers of didactic poetry. We soon tire of a continued series of instructions, especially in a poetical work, where we look for entertainment. The great art of rendering a didactic poem interesting, is to relieve and amuse the reader, by connecting some agreeable episodes with the principal subject. These are always the parts of the work which are best known, and which contribute most to support the reputation of the poet. The principal beauties of Virgil's Georgics lie in digressions of this kind, in which the author has exerted all the force of his genius; such as the prodigies that attended the death of Julius Cæsar, the Praises of Italy, the Happiness of a Country Life, the Fable of Aristæus, and the moving Tale of Orpheus and Eurydice. So also the favourite passages in Lucretius's work, and which alone could render such a dry and abstract subject tolerable in poetry, are the digressions on the Evils of Superstition, the Praise of Epicurus and his philosophy, the Description of the Plague, and several other incident illustrations, which are remarkably elegant, and adorned with a sweetness and harmony of versification peculiar to that poet. There is indeed nothing in poetry, so entertaining or descriptive, but what a didactic writer of genius may be allowed to introduce in some part of his works; provided always, that such episodes arise naturally from the main subject; that they be not disproportioned in length to it; and that the author know how to descend with propriety to the plain, as well as how to rise to the bold and figured style.

Much art may be ſhewn by a didactic poet, in connecting his epiſodes happily with his ſubject. Virgil is alſo diſtinguiſhed for his addreſs in this point. After ſeeming to have left his huſbandmen, he again returns to them very naturally by laying hold of ſome rural circumſtance, to terminate his digreſſion. Thus, having ſpoken of the battle of Pharſalia, he ſubjoins immediately, with much art:

Scilicet et tempus veniet, cum finibus illis,
Agricola, incurvo terram molitus aratro,
Exeſa inveniet ſcabrâ rubigine pila:
Aut gravibus raſtris galeas pulſabit inanes,
Grandiaque effoſſis mirabitur oſſa ſepulchris.*

In Engliſh, Dr. Akenſide has attempted the moſt rich and poetical form of didactic writing in his Pleaſures of the Imagination; and though, in the execution of the whole, he is not equal, he has, in ſeveral parts, ſucceeded happily, and diſplayed much genius. Dr. Armſtrong, in his Art of Preſerving Health, has not aimed at ſo high a ſtrain as the other. But he is more equal; and maintains throughout a chaſte and correct elegance.

Satires and epiſtles naturally run into a more familiar ſtyle, than ſolemn philoſophical poetry. As the manners and characters, which occur in ordinary life, are their ſubject, they require being treated with ſomewhat of the eaſe and freedom of converſation, and hence it is commonly the "muſa pedeſtris," which reigns in ſuch compoſitions.

Satire, in its firſt ſtate among the Romans, had a form different from what it afterwards aſſumed. Its origin is obſcure, and has given occaſion to altercation among critics. It ſeems to have been at firſt a relic of the Ancient Comedy, written partly in proſe, partly in verſe, and abounding with ſcurrility. Ennius and Lucilius corrected its groſſneſs; and at laſt, Horace brought it into that form, which now gives the denomination to ſatirical writing. Reformation of manners, is the end which it profeſſes to have in view; and in order to this end, it

* Then, after length of time, the lab'ring ſwains
Who turn the turf of theſe unhappy plains,
Shall ruſty arms from the plough'd furrows take,
And over empty helmets paſs the rake:
Amus'd at antique titles on the ſtones,
And mighty relics of gigantic bones. DRYDEN.

it assumes the liberty of boldly censuring vice, and vicious characters. It has been carried on in three different manners, by the three great ancient satirists, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius. Horace's style has not much elevation. He entitled his satires, "Sermones," and seems not to have intended rising much higher than prose put into numbers. His manner is easy and graceful. They are rather the follies and weaknesses of mankind, than their enormous vices, which he chooses for the object of his satire. He reproves with a smiling aspect; and while he moralizes like a sound philosopher, discovers, at the same time, the politeness of a courtier. Juvenal is much more serious and declamatory. He has more strength and fire, and more elevation of style, than Horace; but is greatly inferior to him in gracefulness and ease. His satire is more zealous, more sharp and pointed, as being generally directed against more flagitious characters. As Scaliger says of him, "ardet, instat, jugulat;" whereas Horace's character is, "admissus circum præcordia "ludit." Persius has a greater resemblance of the force and fire of Juvenal, than of the politeness of Horace. He is distinguished for sentiments of noble and sublime morality. He is a nervous and lively writer; but withal, often harsh and obscure.

Poetical epistles, when employed on moral or critical subjects, seldom rise into a higher strain of poetry than satires. In the form of an epistle, indeed, many other subjects may be handled, and either love poetry, or elegiac, may be carried on; as in Ovid's Epistolæ Heroidum, and his Epistolæ de Ponto. Such works as these are designed to be merely sentimental; and as their merit consists in being proper expressions of the passion or sentiment which forms the subject, they may assume any tone of poetry that is suited to it. But didactic epistles, of which I now speak, seldom admit of much elevation. They are commonly intended as observations on authors, or on life and characters; in delivering which, the poet does not purpose to compose a formal treatise, or to confine himself strictly to regular method; but gives scope to his genius on some particular theme, which, at the time, has prompted him to write. In all didactic poetry of this kind, it is an important rule "quicquid præcipies, esto brevis." Much of the grace, both of

satirical

satirical and epistolary writing, consists in a spirited conciseness. This gives to such composition an edge and a liveliness, which strike the fancy, and keep attention awake. Much of their merit depends also on just and happy representations of characters. As they are not supported by those high beauties of descriptive and poetical language which adorn other compositions, we expect, in return, to be entertained with lively paintings of men and manners, which are always pleasing; and in these, a certain sprightliness and turn of wit finds its proper place. The higher species of poetry seldom admit it; but here it is seasonable and beautiful.

In all these respects, Mr. Pope's ethical epistles deserve to be mentioned with signal honour, as a model, next to perfect, of this kind of poetry. Here, perhaps, the strength of his genius appeared. In the more sublime parts of poetry, he is not so distinguished. In the enthusiasm, the fire, the force and copiousness of poetic genius, Dryden, though a much less correct writer, appears to have been superior to him. One can scarce think that he was capable of epic or tragic poetry; but within a certain limited region, he has been outdone by no poet. His translation of the Iliad will remain a lasting monument to his honour, as the most elegant and highly finished translation, that, perhaps, ever was given of any poetical work. That he was not incapable of tender poetry, appears from the epistle of Eloisa to Abelard, and from the verses to the memory of an unfortunate lady, which are almost his only sentimental productions; and which indeed are excellent in their kind. But the qualities for which he is chiefly distinguished are, judgment and wit, with a concise and happy expression, and a melodious versification. Few poets ever had more wit, and at the same time more judgment, to direct the proper employment of that wit. This renders his Rape of the Lock the greatest masterpiece that perhaps was ever composed, in the gay and sprightly style; and in his serious works, such as his Essay on Man, and his Ethic Epistles, his wit just discovers itself as much, as to give a proper seasoning to grave reflections. His imitations of Horace are so peculiarly happy, that one is at a loss, whether most to admire the original or the copy; and they are among the few imitations extant, that have all the grace and ease of

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an original. His paintings of characters are natural and lively in a high degree; and never was any writer so happy in that concise spirited style, which gives animation to satires and epistles. We are never so sensible of the good effects of rhyme in English verse, as in reading these parts of his works. We see it adding to the style, an elevation which otherwise it could not have possessed; while at the same time he manages it so artfully, that it never appears in the least to incumber him; but, on the contrary, serves to increase the liveliness of his manner. He tells us himself, that he could express moral observations more concisely, and therefore more forcibly, in rhyme, than he could do in prose.

Among moral and didactic poets, Dr. Young is of too great eminence to be passed over without notice. In all his works, the marks of strong genius appear. His Universal Passion, possesses the full merit of that animated conciseness of style, and lively description of characters, which I mentioned as particularly requisite in satirical and didactic compositions. Though his wit may often be thought too sparkling, and his sentences too pointed, yet the vivacity of his fancy is so great, as to entertain every reader. In his Night Thoughts, there is much energy of expression; in the three first, there are several pathetic passages; and scattered through them all, happy images and illusions, as well as pious reflections, occur. But the sentiments are frequently over-strained and turgid; and the style is too harsh and obscure to be pleasing. Among French authors, Boileau has undoubtedly much merit in didactic poetry. Their later critics are unwilling to allow him any great share of original geinus, or poetic fire.* But his art of poetry, his satires and epistles, must ever be esteemed eminent, not only for solid and judicious thought, but for correct and elegant poetical expression, and fortunate imitation of the ancients.

From didactic, I proceed next to treat of descriptive poetry, where the highest exertions of genius may be displayed. By descriptive poetry, I do not mean any one particular species or form of composition. There are few compositions of any length, that can be called purely descriptive, or wherein the poet proposes to himself no other object, but merely to describe,

* Vid. Poëtique Françoise de Marmontel.

ſcribe, without employing narration, action, or moral ſentiment, as the ground-work of his piece. Deſcription is generally introduced as an embelliſhment, rather than made the ſubject, of a regular work. But though it ſeldom forms a ſeparate ſpecies of writing, yet into every ſpecies of poetical compoſition, paſtoral, lyric, didactic, epic, and dramatic, it both enters, and poſſeſſes in each of them a very conſiderable place; ſo that in treating of poetry, it demands no ſmall attention.

Deſcription is the great teſt of a poet's imagination; and always diſtinguiſhes an original from a ſecond-rate genius. To a writer of the inferior claſs, nature, when at any time he attempts to deſcribe it, appears exhauſted by thoſe who have gone before him in the ſame track. He ſees nothing new, or peculiar, in the object which he would paint; his conceptions of it are looſe and vague; and his expreſſions, of courſe, feeble and general. He gives us words rather than ideas; we meet with the language indeed of poetical deſcription, but we apprehend the object deſcribed very indiſtinctly. Whereas, a true poet makes us imagine that we ſee it before our eyes; he catches the diſtinguiſhing features; he gives it the colours of life and reality; he places it in ſuch a light, that a painter could copy after him. This happy talent is chiefly owing to a ſtrong imagination, which firſt receives a lively impreſſion of the object; and then, by employing a proper ſelection of circumſtances in deſcribing it, tranſmits that impreſſion in its full force to the imagination of others.

In this ſelection of circumſtances lies the great art of pictureſque deſcription. In the firſt place, they ought not to be vulgar, and common ones, ſuch as are apt to paſs by without remark; but, as much as poſſible, new and original, which may catch the fancy and draw attention. In the next place, they ought to be ſuch as particularize the object deſcribed, and mark it ſtrongly. No deſcription, that reſts in generals, can be good. For we can conceive nothing clearly in the abſtract; all diſtinct ideas are formed upon particulars. In the third place, all the circumſtances employed ought to be uniform, and of a piece; that is, when deſcribing a great object, every circumſtance brought into view ſhould tend to aggrandize; or, when deſcribing a

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gay and pleaſant one, ſhould tend to beautify, that by this means, the impreſſion may reſt upon the imagination complete and entire: and laſtly, the circumſtances in deſcription ſhould be expreſſed with conciſeneſs and with ſimplicity; for, when either too much exaggerated, or too long dwelt upon and extended, they never fail to enfeeble the impreſſion that is deſigned to be made. Brevity, almoſt always, contributes to vivacity. Theſe general rules will be beſt underſtood by illuſtrations, founded on particular inſtances.

Of all profeſſed deſcriptive compoſitions, the largeſt and fulleſt that I am acquainted with, in any language, is Mr. Thomſon's Seaſons; a work which poſſeſſes very uncommon merit. The ſtyle, in the midſt of much ſplendour and ſtrength, is ſometimes harſh, and may be cenſured as deficient in eaſe and diſtinctneſs. But, notwithſtanding this defect, Thomſon is a ſtrong and a beautiful deſcriber; for he had a feeling heart, and a warm imagination. He had ſtudied and copied nature with care. Enamoured of her beauties, he not only deſcribed them properly, but felt their impreſſion with ſtrong ſenſibility. The impreſſion which he felt, he tranſmits to his readers; and no perſon of taſte can peruſe any one of his Seaſons, without having the ideas and feelings, which belonged to that ſeaſon, recalled, and rendered preſent to his mind. Several inſtances of moſt beautiful deſcription might be given from him; ſuch as, the ſhower in ſpring, the morning in ſummer, and the man periſhing in ſnow in winter. But, at preſent, I ſhall produce a paſſage of another kind, to ſhew the power of a ſingle well choſen circumſtance, to heighten a deſcription. In his ſummer, relating the effects of heat in the torrid zone, he is led to take notice of the peſtilence that deſtroyed the Engliſh fleet, at Carthagena, under Admiral Vernon; when he has the following lines:

> ——————you, gallant Vernon, ſaw
> The miſerable ſcene; you pitying ſaw
> To infant weakneſs ſunk the warrior's arm;
> Saw the deep racking pang; the ghaſtly form;
> The lip pale quiv'ring; and the beamleſs eye
> No more with ardour bright; you heard the groans
> Of agonizing ſhips from ſhore to ſhore;
> Heard nightly plunged, amid the ſullen waves,
> The frequent corſe.———— L. 1050.

All the circumstances here are properly chosen, for setting this dismal scene in a strong light before our eyes. But what is most striking in the picture, is, the last image. We are conducted through all the scenes of distress, till we come to the mortality prevailing in the fleet, which a vulgar poet would have described by exaggerated expressions, concerning the multiplied trophies and victories of death. But, how much more is the imagination impressed, by this single circumstance of dead bodies thrown overboard every night; of the constant sound of their falling into the waters, and of the Admiral listening to this melancholy sound, so often striking his ear?

Heard nightly plunged, amid the sullen waves,
The frequent corse.*

Mr. Parnell's Tale of the Hermit is conspicuous throughout the whole of it, for beautiful descriptive narration. The manner of the Hermit's setting forth to visit the world; his meeting with a companion, and the houses in which they are successively entertained, of the vain man, the covetous man, and the good man, are pieces of very fine painting, touched with a light and delicate pencil, over-charged with no superfluous colouring, and conveying to us a lively idea of the objects. But, of all the English poems in the descriptive style, the richest and most remarkable

* The elogium which Dr. Johnson, in his Lives of the Poets, gives of Thomson, is high, and, in my opinion, very just. "As a writer, he is entitled to "one praise of the highest kind; his mode of thinking, and of expressing his "thoughts, is original. His blank verse is no more the blank verse of Milton, "or of any other poet, than the rhymes of Prior are the rhymes of Cowley. "His numbers, his pauses, his diction, are of his own growth, without transcription, without imitation. He thinks in a peculiar train, and he thinks always as a man of genius. He looks round on nature and life, with the eye "which nature bestows only on a poet; the eye that distinguishes in every "thing presented to its view, whatever there is on which imagination can delight to be detained; and with a mind, that at once comprehends the vast, "and attends to the minute. The reader of the seasons wonders that he never "saw before what Thomson shews him, and that he never yet has felt what "Thomson impresses. His descriptions of extended scenes, and general effects, "bring before us the whole magnificence of nature, whether pleasing or dreadful. The gaiety of spring, the splendor of summer, the tranquillity of autumn, and the horror of winter, take, in their turn, possession of the mind. "The poet leads us through the appearances of things, as they are successively "varied by the vicissitudes of the year, and imparts to us so much of his own "enthusiasm, that our thoughts expand with his imagery, and kindle with his "sentiments." The censure which the same eminent critic passes upon Thomson's diction, is no less just and well founded, that, "it is too exuberant, and "may sometimes be charged with filling the ear more than the mind."

remarkable are, Milton's Allegro and Penseroso. The collection of gay images on the one hand, and of melancholy ones on the other, exhibited in these two small, but inimitably fine poems, are as exquisite as can be conceived. They are, indeed, the storehouse whence many succeeding poets have enriched their descriptions of similar subjects; and they alone are sufficient for illustrating the observations which I made, concerning the proper selection of circumstances in descriptive writing. Take for instance, the following passage from the Penseroso:

——— I walk unseen
On the dry, smooth shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon;
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far off curfew sound,
Over some wide watered shore,
Swinging slow with solemn roar:
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom;
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm,
To bless the doors from nightly harm;
Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,
Be seen, in some high lonely tower,
Exploring Plato, to unfold
What worlds, or what vast regions hold
Th' immortal mind, that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook;
And of those dæmons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under-ground.

Here there are no unmeaning general expressions; all is particular; all is picturesque; nothing forced or exaggerated; but a simple style, and a collection of strong expressive images, which are all of one class, and recal a number of similar ideas of the melancholy kind: particularly the walk by moon-light; the sound of the curfew bell heard distant; the dying embers in the chamber; the bellman's call; and the lamp seen at midnight in the high lonely tower. We may observe, too, the conciseness of the poet's manner. He does not rest long on one circumstance, or employ a great many words to describe it; which always makes the impression faint and languid; but

placing it in one ſtrong point of view, full and clear before the reader, he there leaves it.

"From his ſhield and his helmet," ſays Homer, deſcribing one of his heroes in battle, "From his ſhield and his helmet, there "ſparkled an inceſſant blaze; like the autumnal ſtar, when it "appears in its brightneſs from the waters of the ocean." This is ſhort and lively; but when it comes into Mr. Pope's hand, it evaporates in three pompous lines, each of which repeats the ſame image in different words:

High on his helm celeſtial lightnings play,
His beamy ſhield emits a living ray;
Th' unwearied blaze inceſſant ſtreams ſupplies,
Like the red ſtar that fires th' autumnal ſkies.

It is to be obſerved, in general, that, in deſcribing ſolemn or great objects, the conciſe manner, is almoſt always proper. Deſcriptions of gay and ſmiling ſcenes can bear to be more amplified and prolonged; as ſtrength is not the predominant quality expected in theſe. But where a ſublime, or a pathetic impreſſion is intended to be made, energy is above all things required. The imagination ought then to be ſeized at once; and it is far more deeply impreſſed by one ſtrong and ardent image than by the anxious minuteneſs of laboured illuſtration. —"His face was without form, and dark," ſays Oſſian, deſcribing a ghoſt, "the ſtars dim twinkled through his form; "thrice he ſighed over the hero; and thrice the winds of the "night roared around."

It deſerves attention too, that in deſcribing inanimate natural objects, the poet, in order to enliven his deſcription, ought always to mix living beings with them. The ſcenes of dead and ſtill life are apt to pall upon us, if the poet do not ſuggeſt ſentiments and introduce life and action into his deſcription. This is well known to every painter who is a maſter in his art. Seldom has any beautiful landſcape been drawn, without ſome human being repreſented on the canvas, as beholding it, or on ſome account concerned in it:

Hic gelidi fontes, hic mollia prata, Lycori,
Hic nemus, hic ipſo tecum conſumerer ævo.*

The

* Here cooling fountains roll through flow'ry meads,
Here woods, Lycoris, lift their verdant heads,
Here could I wear my careleſs life away,
And in thy arms inſenſibly decay. VIRG. Ecl. X. WARTON.

The touching part of these fine lines of Virgil's, is the last which sets before us the interest of two lovers in this rural scene. A long description of the "*fontes*," the "*nemus*," and the "*prata*," in the most poetical modern manner, would have been insipid without this stroke, which, in a few words, brings home to the heart all the beauties of the place; "hic ipso te-"cum consumerer ævo." It is a great beauty in Milton's Allegro, that it is all alive, and full of persons.

Every thing, as I before said, in description, should be as marked and particular as possible, in order to imprint on the mind a distinct and complete image. A hill, a river, or a lake, rises up more conspicuous to the fancy, when some particular lake, or river, or hill, is specified, than when the terms are left general. Most of the ancient writers have been sensible of the advantage which this gives to description. Thus, in that beautiful pastoral composition, the Song of Solomon, the images are commonly particularised by the objects to which they allude. It is the "rose of Sharon; the lily of the vallies; the "flock which feeds on Mount Gilead; the stream which "comes from Mount Lebanon. Come with me, from Leba-"non, my spouse; look from the top of Amana, from the "top of Shenir and Hermon, from the mountains of the "leopards." Chap. iv. 8. So Horace:

Quid dedicatum poscit Apollinem
Vates? quid orat de patera novum
Fundens liquorum? non opimas
Sardiniæ segetes feracis;
Non æstuosæ grata Calabriæ
Armenta; non aurum aut ebur Indicum,
Non rura, quæ Liris quietâ
Mordet aqua, taciturnus amnis.* Lib. I. Ode 31.

Both Homer and Virgil are remarkable for the talent of poetical description. In Virgil's second Æneid, where he describes the

* When at Apollo's hallowed shrine
The poet hails the power divine,
And here his first libation pours,
What is the blessing he implores?
He nor desires the swelling grain,
That yellows o'er Sardinia's plain,
Nor the fair herds that lowing feed
On warm Calabria's flowery mead;
Nor ivory of spotless shine;
Nor gold forth flaming from the mine;
Nor the rich fields that Liris laves,
And eats away with silent waves. FRANCIS.

the burning and sacking of Troy, the particulars are so well selected and represented, that the reader finds himself in the midst of that scene of horror. The death of Priam, especially, may be singled out as a master-piece of description. All the circumstances of the aged monarch arraying himself in armour, when he finds the enemy making themselves masters of the city; his meeting with his family, who are taking shelter at an altar in the court of the palace, and their placing him in the midst of them; his indignation when he beholds Pyrrhus slaughtering one of his sons; the feeble dart which he throws; with Pyrrhus's brutal behaviour, and his manner of putting the old man to death, are painted in the most affecting manner, and with a masterly hand. All Homer's battles, and Milton's account, both of paradise and of the infernal regions, furnish many beautiful instances of poetical description. Ossian too, paints in strong and lively colours, though he employs few circumstances; and his chief excellency lies in painting to the heart. One of his fullest descriptions is the following of the ruins of Balclutha: "I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were "desolate. The fire had resounded within the halls; and the "voice of the people is now heard no more. The stream of "Clutha was removed from its place, by the fall of the walls; "the thistle shook there its lonely head; the moss whistled to "the wind. The fox looked out of the window; the rank "grass waved round his head. Desolate is the dwelling of "Moina. Silence is in the house of her fathers." Shakespeare cannot be omitted on this occasion, as singularly eminent for painting with the pencil of nature. Though it be in manners and characters, that his chief excellency lies, yet his scenery also is often exquisite, and happily described by a single stroke; as in that fine line of the "Merchant of Venice," which conveys to the fancy as natural and beautiful an image, as can possibly be exhibited in so few words:

How sweet the moon-light sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, &c.

Much of the beauty of descriptive poetry depends on a right choice of epithets. Many poets, it must be confessed, are too careless in this particular. Epithets are frequently brought in, merely to complete the verse, or make the rhyme answer; and

hence

hence they are so unmeaning and redundant; expletive words only, which, in place of adding any thing to the description, clog and enervate it. Virgil's "Liquidi fontes," and Horace's, "Prata canis albicant pruinis," must, I am afraid, be assigned to this class: for, to denote by an epithet that water is liquid, or that snow is white, is no better than mere tautology. Every epithet should either add a new idea to the word which it qualifies, or at least serve to raise and heighten its known signification. So in Milton,

——Who shall tempt with wand'ring feet
The dark, unbottom'd, infinite abyss,
And through the palpable obscure, find out
His uncouth way? or spread his airy flight,
Upborn with indefatigable wings,
Over the vast abrupt? B. II.

The epithets employed here plainly add strength to the description, and assist the fancy in conceiving it;—the wandering feet—the unbottomed abyss—the palpable obscure—the uncouth way—the indefatigable wing—serve to render the images more complete and distinct. But there are a sort of general epithets, which, though they appear to raise the signification of the word to which they are joined, yet leave it so undetermined, and are now become so trite and beaten in poetical language, as to be perfectly insipid. Of this kind are "barbarous "discord—hateful envy—mighty chiefs—bloody war—gloomy "shades—direful scenes," and a thousand more of the same kind which we meet with occasionally in good poets; but with which, poets of inferior genius abound every where, as the great props of their affected sublimity. They give a sort of swell to the language, and raise it above the tone of prose; but they serve not in the least to illustrate the object described; on the contrary, they load the style with a languid verbosity.

Sometimes it is in the power of a poet of genius, by one well-chosen epithet, to accomplish a description, and by means of a single word, to paint a whole scene to the fancy. We may remark this effect of an epithet in the following fine lines of Milton's Lycidas:

Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep,
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.

Among

Among these wild scenes, "Deva's wizard stream" is admirably imagined; by this one word, presenting to the fancy all the romantic ideas, of a river flowing through a desolate country, with banks haunted by wizards and enchanters. Akin to this is an epithet which Horace gives to the river Hydaspes. A good man, says he, stands in need of no arms.

> Sive per Syrtes iter æstuosas,
> Sive facturus per inhospitalem
> Caucasum; vel quæ loca fabulosus
> Lambit Hydaspes.*

This epithet "fabulosus," one of the commentators on Horace has changed into "sabulosus," or sandy; substituting, by a strange want of taste, the common and trivial epithet of the sandy river, in place of that beautiful picture which the poet gives us, by calling Hydaspes the Romantic River, or the scene of Adventures and Poetic Tales.

Virgil has employed an epithet with great beauty and propriety, when accounting for Dædalus not having engraved the fortune of his son Icarus:

> Bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro,
> Bis patriæ cecidere manus.† Æn. VI.

These instances and observations may give some just idea of true poetical description. We have reason always to distrust an author's descriptive talents, when we find him laborious and turgid, amassing common-place epithets and general expressions, to work up a high conception of some object, of which, after all, we can form but an indistinct idea. The best describers are simple and concise. They set before us such features of an object, as, on the first view, strike and warm the fancy: they give us ideas which a statuary or a painter could lay hold of, and work after them; which is one of the strongest and most decisive trials of the real merit of description.

LECTURE

> * Whether through Lybia's burning sands
> Our journey leads, or Scythia's lands,
> Amidst th' unhospitable waste of snows,
> Or where the fabulous Hydaspes flows. Francis.

> † Here hapless Icarus had found his part,
> Had not the father's grief restrain'd his art;
> He twice assayed to cast his son in gold,
> Twice from his hand he dropp'd the forming mould. Dryden.

In this translation the thought is justly given; but the beauty of the expression "patriæ manus," which in the original conveys the thought with so much tenderness, is lost.

LECTURE XLI.

THE POETRY OF THE HEBREWS.

AMONG the various kinds of poetry, which we are at present employed in examining, the ancient Hebrew poetry, or that of the Scriptures, justly deserves a place. Viewing those sacred books in no higher light, than as they present to us the most ancient monuments of poetry extant, at this day, in the world, they afford a curious object of criticism. They display the taste, of a remote age and country. They exhibit a species of composition, very different from any other with which we are acquainted, and, at the same time, beautiful. Considered as inspired writings, they give rise to discussions of another kind. But it is our business, at present, to consider them not in a theological, but in a critical view: and it must needs give pleasure, if we shall find the beauty and dignity of the composition, adequate to the weight and importance of the matter. Dr. Lowth's learned treatise, "De Sacra Poesi Hebræorum," ought to be perused by all who desire to become thoroughly acquainted with this subject. It is a work exceedingly valuable, both for the elegance of its composition and for the justness of the criticism which it contains. In this Lecture, as I cannot illustrate the subject with more benefit to the reader, than by following the track of that ingenious author, I shall make much use of his observations.

I need not spend many words in showing, that among the books of the Old Testament there is such an apparent diversity in style, as sufficiently discovers, which of them are to be considered as poetical, and which, as prose compositions. While the historical books, and legislative writings of Moses, are evidently prosaic in the composition, the Book of Job, the Psalms of David, the Song of Solomon, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, a great

a great part of the prophetical writings, and ſeveral paſſages ſcattered occaſionally through the hiſtorical books, carry the moſt plain and diſtinguiſhing marks of poetical writing.

There is not the leaſt reaſon for doubting, that originally theſe were written in verſe, or ſome kind of meaſured numbers; though, as the ancient pronunciation of the Hebrew language is now loſt, we are not able to aſcertain the nature of the Hebrew verſe, or at moſt can aſcertain it but imperfectly. Concerning this point there have been great controverſies among learned men, which it is immaterial to our preſent purpoſe to diſcuſs. Taking the Old Teſtament in our own tranſlation, which is extremely literal, we find plain marks of many parts of the original being written in a meaſured ſtyle; and the "disjecti "membra poëtæ," often ſhew themſelves. Let any perſon read the hiſtorical introduction of the book of Job, contained in the firſt and ſecond chapters, and then go on to Job's ſpeech in the beginning of the third chapter, and he cannot avoid being ſenſible, that he paſſes all at once from the region of proſe, to that of poetry. Not only the poetical ſentiments, and the figured ſtyle, warn him of the change; but the cadence of the ſentence, and the arrangement of the words are ſenſibly altered; the change is as great as when he paſſes from reading Cæſar's Commentaries, to read Virgil's Æneid. This is ſufficient to ſhow that the ſacred Scriptures contain, what muſt be called poetry in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of that word; and I ſhall afterwards ſhow, that they contain inſtances of moſt of the different forms of poetical writing. It may be proper to remark, in paſſing, that hence ariſes a moſt invincible argument in honour of poetry. No perſon can imagine that to be a frivolous and contemptible art, which has been employed by writers under divine inſpiration; and has been choſen as a proper channel, for conveying to the world the knowledge of divine truth.

From the earlieſt times, muſic and poetry were cultivated among the Hebrews. In the days of the Judges mention is made of the ſchools or colleges of the prophets; where one part of the employment of the perſons trained in ſuch ſchools was, to ſing the praiſes of God, accompanied with various inſtruments. In the firſt Book of Samuel, (chap. x. 5.) we find on a public occaſion, a company of thoſe prophets coming down from the

hill

hill where the school was, "prophesying," it is said, "with "the psaltery, tabret and harp before them." But in the days of king David, music and poetry were carried to their greatest height. For the service of the tabernacle, he appointed four thousand Levites, divided into twenty-four courses, and marshalled under several leaders, whose sole business it was to sing hymns, and to perform the instrumental music in the public worship. Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, were the chief directors of the music; and from the titles of some psalms, it would appear that they were also eminent composers of hymns or sacred poems. In chapter xxv. of the first Book of Chronicles, an account is given of David's institutions, relating to the sacred music and poetry; which were certainly more costly, more splendid and magnificent, than ever obtained in the public service of any other nation.

The general construction of the Hebrew poetry is of a singular nature, and peculiar to itself. It consists in dividing every period into correspondent, for the most part into equal members, which answer to one another, both in sense and sound. In the first member of the period a sentiment is expressed; and in the second member, the same sentiment is amplified, or is repeated in different terms, or sometimes contrasted with its opposite; but in such a manner that the same structure, and nearly the same number of words is preserved. This is the general strain of all the Hebrew poetry. Instances of it occur every where on opening the Old Testament. Thus, in Psalm xcvi. "Sing unto the Lord a new song—sing unto the Lord "all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, and bless his name—shew "forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among "the heathen—his wonders among all the people. For the "Lord is great, and greatly to be praised—he is to be feared "above all the gods. Honour and majesty are before him—"strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." It is owing, in a great measure, to this form of composition, that our version, though in prose, retains so much of a poetical cast. For the version being strictly word for word after the original, the form and order of the original sentence are preserved; which, by this artificial structure, this regular alternation and correspondence of parts, makes the ear sensible of a departure from the common style and tone of prose.

The origin of this form of poetical composition among the Hebrews, is clearly to be deduced from the manner in which their sacred hymns were wont to be sung. They were accompanied with music, and they were performed by choirs or bands of singers and musicians, who answered alternately to each other. When, for instance, one band began the hymn thus: "The "Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice;" the chorus, or semichorus, took up the corresponding versicle: "Let the multitudes "of the isles be glad thereof."——"Clouds and darkness are "round about him," sung the one; the other replied, "Judg-"ment and righteousness are the habitation of his throne." And in this manner their poetry, when set to music, naturally divided itself into a succession of strophes and antistrophes correspondent to each other; whence, it is probable, the origin of the antiphon, or responsory, in the public religious service of so many christian churches.

We are expresly told, in the book of Ezra, that the Levites sung in this manner; "Alternatim," or by course; (Ezra iii. 11.) and some of David's Psalms bear plain marks of their being composed in order to be thus performed. The 24th psalm, in particular, which is thought to have been composed on the great and solemn occasion of the ark of the covenant being brought back to Mount Zion, must have had a noble effect when performed after this manner, as Dr. Lowth has illustrated it. The whole people are supposed to be attending the procession. The Levites and singers, divided into their several courses, and accompanied with all their musical instruments, lead the way. After the introduction to the psalm, in the two first verses, when the procession begins to ascend the sacred mount, the question is put, as by a semichorus, "Who shall ascend unto "the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?" The response is made by the full chorus with the greatest dignity: "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath "not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." As the procession approaches to the doors of the tabernacle, the chorus with all their instruments, join in this exclamation: "Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlast-"ing doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." Here the semichorus plainly break in, as with a lower voice, "Who is "this

"this King of Glory?" and at the moment when the ark is introduced into the tabernacle, the response is made by the burst of the whole chorus: "The Lord, strong and mighty; the "Lord, mighty in battle." I take notice of this instance the rather, as it serves to show how much of the grace and magnificence of the sacred poems, as indeed of all poems, depend upon our knowing the particular occasions for which they were composed, and the particular circumstances to which they were adapted; and how much of this beauty must now be lost to us, through our imperfect acquaintance with many particulars of the Hebrew history, and Hebrew rites.

The method of composition which has been explained, by corresponding versicles, being universally introduced into the hymns or musical poetry of the Jews, easily spread itself through their other poetical writings, which were not designed to be sung in alternate portions, and which therefore did not so much require this mode of composition. But the mode became familiar to their ears, and carried with it a certain solemn majesty of style, particularly suited to sacred subjects. Hence, throughout the prophetical writings, we find it prevailing as much as in the Psalms of David; as, for instance, in the Prophet Isaiah: (chap. lx. 1.) "Arise, shine, for thy light "is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee: for "lo! darkness shall cover the earth,—and gross darkness the "people. But the Lord shall rise upon thee, and his glory shall "be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, "and kings to the brightness of thy rising." This form of writing is one of the great characteristics of the ancient Hebrew poetry; very different from, and even opposite to, the style of the Greek and Roman poets.

Independent of this peculiar mode of construction, the sacred poetry is distinguished by the highest beauties of strong, concise, bold, and figurative expression.

Conciseness and strength, are two of its most remarkable characters. One might indeed at first imagine, that the practice of the Hebrew poets, of always amplifying the same thought, by repetition or contrast, might tend to enfeeble their style. But they conduct themselves so, as not to produce this effect. Their sentences are always short. Few superfluous

words

words are used. The same thought is never dwelt upon long. To their conciseness and sobriety of expression, their poetry is indebted for much of its sublimity; and all writers who attempt the sublime, might profit much, by imitating, in this respect, the style of the Old Testament. For, as I have formerly had occasion to show, nothing is so great an enemy to the sublime, as prolixity or diffuseness. The mind is never so much affected by any great idea that is presented to it, as when it is struck all at once; by attempting to prolong the impression, we at the same time weaken it. Most of the ancient original poets of all nations, are simple and concise. The superfluities and excrescences of style, were the result of imitation in after-times; when composition passed into inferior hands, and flowed from art and study, more than from native genius.

No writings whatever abound so much with the most bold and animated figures, as the sacred books. It is proper to dwell a little upon this article; as, through our early familiarity with these books (a familiarity too often with the sound of the words, rather than with their sense and meaning,) beauties of style escape us in the scripture, which in any other book, would draw particular attention. Metaphors, comparisons, allegories, and personifications, are there particularly frequent. In order to do justice to these, it is necessary that we transport ourselves as much as we can into the land of Judæa; and place before our eyes that scenery, and those objects with which the Hebrew writers were conversant. Some attention of this kind is requisite, in order to relish the writings of any poet of a foreign country, and a different age. For the imagery of every good poet is copied from nature, and real life; if it were not so, it could not be lively; and therefore, in order to enter into the propriety of his images, we must endeavour to place ourselves in his situation. Now we shall find that the metaphors and comparisons of the Hebrew poets, present to us a very beautiful view of the natural objects of their own country, and of the arts and employments of their common life.

Natural objects are in some measure common to them with poets of all ages and countries. Light and darkness, trees and flowers, the forest and the cultivated field, suggest to them many beautiful figures. But, in order to relish their figures of

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this kind, we muſt take notice, that ſeveral of them ariſe from the particular circumſtances of the land of Judæa. During the ſummer months, little or no rain falls throughout all that region. While the heats continued, the country was intolerably parched; want of water was a great diſtreſs; and a plentiful ſhower falling, or a rivulet breaking forth, altered the whole face of nature, and introduced much higher ideas of refreſhment and pleaſure, than the like cauſes can ſuggeſt to us. Hence, to repreſent diſtreſs, ſuch frequent alluſions amongſt them, "to a dry and thirſty land where no water is;" and hence to deſcribe a change from diſtreſs to proſperity, their metaphors are founded on the falling of ſhowers, and the burſting out of ſprings in the deſart. Thus in Iſaiah, "The wilderneſs and "the ſolitary place ſhall be glad, and the deſart ſhall re-"joice and bloſſom as the roſe. For in the wilderneſs ſhall "waters break out, and ſtreams in the deſart; and the parch-"ed ground ſhall become a pool; and the thirſty land, ſprings "of water; in the habitation of dragons there ſhall be graſs, "with ruſhes and reeds." Chap. xxxv. 1, 6, 7. Images of this nature are very familiar to Iſaiah, and occur in many parts of his book.

Again, as Judæa was a hilly country, it was, during the rainy months, expoſed to frequent inundations by the ruſhing of torrents, which came down ſuddenly from the mountains, and carried every thing before them; and Jordan, their only great river, annually overflowed its banks. Hence the frequent alluſions to "the noiſe, and to the ruſhings of many waters;" and hence great calamities ſo often compared to the overflowing torrent, which, in ſuch a country, muſt have been images particularly ſtriking: "Deep calleth unto deep at the noiſe of "thy water ſpouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone "over me." Pſalm xlii. 7.

The two moſt remarkable mountains of the country, were Lebanon and Carmel: the former noted for its height, and the woods of lofty cedars that covered it; the latter for its beauty and fertility, the richneſs of its vines and olives. Hence, with the greateſt propriety, Lebanon is employed as an image of whatever is great, ſtrong, or magnificent; Carmel, of what is ſmiling and beautiful. "The glory of Lebanon," ſays Iſaiah,

Iſaiah, "ſhall be given to it, and the excellency of Carmel." (xxxv. 2.) Lebanon is often put metaphorically for the whole ſtate or people of Iſrael, for the temple, for the king of Aſſyria; Carmel, for the bleſſings of peace and proſperity. "His countenance is as Lebanon," ſays Solomon, ſpeaking of the dignity of a man's appearance; but when he deſcribes female beauty, "Thine head is like mount Carmel." Song, v. 15. and vii. 5.

It is farther to be remarked under this head, that in the images of the awful and terrible kind, with which the ſacred poets abound, they plainly draw their deſcriptions from that violence of the elements, and thoſe concuſſions of nature, with which their climate rendered them acquainted. Earthquakes were not unfrequent; and the tempeſts of hail, thunder, and lightning, in Judæa and Arabia, accompanied with whirlwinds and darkneſs, far exceed any thing of that ſort which happens in more temperate regions. Iſaiah deſcribes, with great majeſty, the earth "reeling to and fro like a drunkard, "and removed like a cottage." (xxiv. 20.) And in thoſe circumſtances of terror, with which an appearance of the Almighty is deſcribed in the 18th Pſalm, when his "pavilion "round about him was darkneſs; when hailſtones and coals "of fire were his voice; and when, at his rebuke, the chan-"nels of the waters are ſaid to be ſeen, and the foundations of "the hills diſcovered;" though there may be ſome reference, as Dr. Lowth thinks, to the hiſtory of God's deſcent upon Mount Sinai, yet it ſeems more probable, that the figures were taken directly from thoſe commotions of nature with which the author was acquainted, and which ſuggeſted ſtronger and nobler images than what now occur to us.

Beſides the natural objects of their own country, we find the rites of their religion, and the arts and employments of their common life, frequently employed as grounds of imagery among the Hebrews. They were a people chiefly occupied with agriculture and paſturage. Theſe were arts held in high honour among them; not diſdained by their patriarchs, kings, and prophets. Little addicted to commerce; ſeparated from the reſt of the world by their laws and their religion; they were, during the better days of their ſtate, ſtrangers in a great meaſure to the refinements of luxury. Hence flowed, of courſe, the

many

many allusions to pastoral life, to the "green pastures and the "still waters," and to the care and watchfulness of a shepherd over his flock, which carry to this day so much beauty and tenderness in them, in the 23d psalm, and in many other passages of the poetical writings of scripture. Hence, all the images founded upon rural employments, upon the wine press, the threshing floor, the stubble and the chaff. To disrelish all such images, is the effect of false delicacy. Homer is at least as frequent, and much more minute and particular, in his similes, founded on what we now call low life; but, in his management of them, far inferior to the sacred writers, who generally mix with their comparisons of this kind somewhat of dignity and grandeur, to ennoble them. What inexpressible grandeur does the following rural image in Isaiah, for instance, receive from the intervention of the Deity: "The nations shall rush like the "rushings of many waters; but God shall rebuke them, and "they shall fly far off; and they shall be chased as the chaff of "the mountain before the wind, and like the down of the "thistle before the whirlwind."

Figurative allusions too, we frequently find to the rites and ceremonies of their religion; to the legal distinctions of things clean and unclean; to the mode of their temple service; to the dress of their priests; and to the most noted incidents recorded in their sacred history; as to the destruction of Sodom, the descent of God upon Mount Sinai, and the miraculous passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea. The religion of the Hebrews included the whole of their laws and civil constitution. It was full of splendid external rites that occupied their senses; it was connected with every part of their national history and establishment; and hence, all ideas founded on religion, possessed in this nation a dignity and importance peculiar to themselves, and were uncommonly fitted to impress the imagination.

From all this it results, that the imagery of the sacred poets is, in a high degree, expressive and natural; it is copied directly from real objects that were before their eyes; it has this advantage, of being more complete within itself, more entirely founded on national ideas and manners, than that of most oth-

er poets. In reading their works we find ourſelves continually in the land of Judæa. The palm-trees, and the cedars of Lebanon, are ever riſing in our view. The face of their territory, the circumſtance of their climate, the manners of the people, and the auguſt ceremonies of their religion, conſtantly paſs under different forms before us.

The compariſons employed by the ſacred poets are generally ſhort, touching on one point only of reſemblance, rather than branching out into little epiſodes. In this reſpect, they have perhaps an advantage over the Greek and Roman authors; whoſe compariſons, by the length to which they are extended, ſometimes interrupt the narration too much, and carry too viſible marks of ſtudy and labour. Whereas, in the Hebrew poets, they appear more like the glowings of a lively fancy, juſt glancing aſide to ſome reſembling object, and preſently returning to its track. Such is the following fine compariſon, introduced to deſcribe the happy influence of good government upon a people, in what are called the laſt words of David, recorded in the 2d book of Samuel: (xxiii. 3.) "He that ruleth "over men muſt be juſt, ruling in the fear of God; and he "ſhall be as the light of the morning, when the ſun riſeth; "even a morning without clouds; as the tender graſs ſpringeth "out of the earth, by clear ſhining after rain." This is one of the moſt regular and formal compariſons in the ſacred books.

Allegory, likewiſe, is a figure frequently found in them. When formerly treating of this figure, I gave, for an inſtance of it, that remarkably fine and well ſupported allegory, which occurs in the 80th Pſalm, wherein the people of Iſrael are compared to a vine. Of parables, which form a ſpecies of allegory, the prophetical writings are full: and if to us they ſometimes appear obſcure, we muſt remember, that in thoſe early times, it was univerſally the mode throughout all the eaſtern nations, to convey ſacred truths under myſterious figures and repreſentations.

But the poetical figure, which, beyond all others, elevates the ſtyle of ſcripture, and gives it a peculiar boldneſs and ſublimity, is Proſopopœia or Perſonification. No perſonifications employed by any poets, are ſo magnificent and ſtriking as thoſe

of

of the inspired writers. On great occasions, they animate every part of nature; especially, when any appearance or operation of the Almighty is concerned. "Before him went the "pestilence—the waters saw thee, O God, and were afraid—"the mountains saw thee, and they trembled.—The overflow-"ing of the water passed by;—the deep uttered his voice, and "lifted up his hands on high." When inquiry is made about the place of wisdom, Job introduces the "Deep, saying, it is not "in me; and the sea saith, it is not in me. Destruction and "death say, we have heard the fame thereof with our ears." That noted sublime passage in the book of Isaiah, which describes the fall of the king of Assyria, is full of personified objects; the fir-trees and cedars of Lebanon breaking forth into exultation on the fall of the tyrant; hell from beneath, stirring up all the dead to meet him at his coming; and the dead kings introduced as speaking, and joining in the triumph. In the same strain, are those many lively and passionate apostrophes to cities and countries, to persons and things, with which the prophetical writings every where abound. "O thou sword of "the Lord! how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put thyself "up into the scabbard, rest and be still. How can it be quiet," (as the reply is instantly made) "seeing the Lord hath given "it a charge against Askelon, and the sea-shore; there hath "he appointed it." Jerem. xlvii. 6.

In general, for it would carry us too far to enlarge upon all the instances, the style of the poetical books of the Old Testament is, beyond the style of all other poetical works, fervid, bold, and animated. It is extremely different from that regular correct expression, to which our ears are accustomed in modern poetry. It is the burst of inspiration. The scenes are not coolly described, but represented as passing before our eyes. Every object, and every person, is addressed and spoken to, as if present. The transition is often abrupt; the connexion often obscure; the persons are often changed; figures crowded, and heaped upon one another. Bold sublimity, not correct elegance, is its character. We see the spirit of the writer raised beyond himself, and labouring to find vent for ideas too mighty for his utterance.

After these remarks on the poetry of the scriptures in general, I shall conclude this dissertation, with a short account of the different kinds of poetical composition in the sacred books; and of the distinguishing characters of some of the chief writers.

The several kinds of poetical composition which we find in scripture, are chiefly the didactic, elegiac, pastoral, and lyric. Of the didactic species of poetry, the Book of Proverbs is the principal instance. The nine first chapters of that book are highly poetical, adorned with many distinguished graces, and figures of expression. At the 10th chapter the style is sensibly altered, and descends into a lower strain, which is continued to the end; retaining however that sententious, pointed manner, and that artful construction of period, which distinguishes all the Hebrew poetry. The Book of Ecclesiastes comes likewise under this head; and some of the psalms, as the 119th in particular.

Of elegiac poetry, many very beautiful specimens occur in scripture; such as the lamentation of David over his friend Jonathan; several passages in the prophetical books; and several of David's psalms, composed on occasions of distress and mourning. The 42d psalm, in particular, is, in the highest degree, tender and plaintive. But the most regular and perfect elegiac composition in the scripture, perhaps in the whole world, is the book, entitled the Lamentations of Jeremiah. As the prophet mourns in that book over the destruction of the temple, and the holy city, and the overthrow of the whole state, he assembles all the affecting images which a subject so melancholy could suggest. The composition is uncommonly artificial. By turns, the prophet, and the city of Jerusalem, are introduced, as pouring forth their sorrows; and, in the end, a chorus of the people send up the most earnest and plaintive supplications to God. The lines of the original too, as may, in part, appear from our translation, are longer than is usual in the other kinds of Hebrew poetry; and the melody is rendered thereby more flowing, and better adapted to the querimonous strain of elegy.

The Song of Solomon affords us a high exemplification of pastoral poetry. Considered with respect to its spiritual meaning,

ing, it is undoubtedly a myſtical allegory; in its form, it is a dramatic paſtoral, or a perpetual dialogue between perſonages in the character of ſhepherds; and, ſuitably to that form, it is full of rural and paſtoral images, from beginning to end.

Of lyric poetry, or that which is intended to be accompanied with muſic, the Old Teſtament is full. Beſides a great number of hymns and ſongs, which we find ſcattered in the hiſtorical and prophetical books, ſuch as the Song of Moſes, the Song of Deborah, and many others of like nature, the whole Book of Pſalms is to be conſidered as a collection of ſacred odes. In theſe, we find the ode exhibited in all the varieties of its form, and ſupported with the higheſt ſpirit of lyric poetry; ſometimes ſprightly, cheerful and triumphant; ſometimes ſolemn and magnificent; ſometimes tender and ſoft. From theſe inſtances, it clearly appears, that there are contained in the Holy Scriptures, full exemplifications of ſeveral of the chief kinds of poetical writing.

Among the different compoſers of the ſacred books, there is an evident diverſity of ſtyle and manner; and to trace their different characters in this view, will contribute not a little towards our reading their writings with greater advantage. The moſt eminent of the ſacred poets are, the Author of the book of Job, David, and Iſaiah. As the compoſitions of David are of the lyric kind, there is a greater variety of ſtyle and manner in his works, than in thoſe of the other two. The manner in which, conſidered merely as a poet, David chiefly excels, is the pleaſing, the ſoft, and the tender. In his pſalms, there are many lofty and ſublime paſſages; but, in ſtrength of deſcription, he yields to Job; in ſublimity, he yields to Iſaiah. It is a ſort of temperate grandeur, for which David is chiefly diſtinguiſhed; and to this he always ſoon returns, when, upon ſome occaſions, he riſes above it. The pſalms in which he touches us moſt, are thoſe in which he deſcribes the happineſs of the righteous, or the goodneſs of God; expreſſes the tender breathings of a devout mind, or ſends up moving and affectionate ſupplications to Heaven. Iſaiah is, without exception, the moſt ſublime of all poets. This is abundantly viſible in our tranſlation; and, what is a material circumſtance, none of the

books

books of scripture appear to have been more happily translated than the writings of this prophet. Majesty is his reigning character; a majesty more commanding, and more uniformly supported, than is to be found among the rest of the Old Testament poets. He possesses, indeed, a dignity and grandeur, both in his conceptions and expressions, which is altogether unparalleled, and peculiar to himself. There is more clearness and order too, and a more visible distribution of parts, in his Book, than in any other of the prophetical writings.

When we compare him with the rest of the poetical prophets, we immediately see in Jeremiah, a very different genius. Isaiah employs himself generally on magnificent subjects. Jeremiah has little turn for the sublime, and inclines always to the tender and elegiac. Ezekiel, in poetical grace and elegance, is much inferior to them both; but he is distinguished by a character of uncommon force and ardour. To use the elegant expressions of Bishop Lowth, with regard to this prophet: "Est "atrox, vehemens, tragicus; in sensibus, fervidus, acerbus, "indignabundus; in imaginibus fecundus, truculentus, et non-"nunquam penè deformis; in dictione grandiloquus, gravis, "austerus, et interdum incultus; frequens in repetitionibus, "non decoris aut gratiæ causa, sed ex indignatione et violentia. "Quicquid susceperit tractandum id sedulò persequitur; in "eo unicè hæret defixus; a proposito raro deflectens. In cæt-"eris, a plerisque vatibus fortasse superatus; sed in eo genere, "ad quod videtur a natura unice comparatus, nimirum, vi, "pondere, impetu, granditate, nemo unquam eum superavit." The same learned writer compares Isaiah to Homer, Jeremiah to Simonides, and Ezekiel to Æschylus. Most of the Book of Isaiah is strictly poetical; of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, not above one half can be held to belong to poetry. Among the minor prophets, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, and especially Nahum, are distinguished for poetical spirit. In the prophecies of Daniel and Jonah, there is no poetry.

It only now remains to speak of the Book of Job, with which I shall conclude. It is known to be extremely ancient; generally reputed the most ancient of all the poetical books; the author uncertain. It is remarkable, that this book has no

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connexion with the affairs or manners of the Jews, or Hebrews. The ſcene is laid in the land of Uz, or Idumæa, which is a part of Arabia; and the imagery employed is generally of a different kind, from what I before ſhowed to be peculiar to the Hebrew poets. We meet with no alluſions to the great events of ſacred hiſtory, to the religious rites of the Jews, to Lebanon or to Carmel, or any of the peculiarities of the climate of Judæa. We find few compariſons founded on rivers or torrents: theſe were not familiar objects in Arabia. But the longeſt compariſon that occurs in the book, is to an object frequent and well known in that region, a brook that fails in the ſeaſon of heat, and diſappoints the expectation of the traveller.

The poetry, however, of the book of Job, is not only equal to that of any other of the ſacred writings, but is ſuperior to them all, except thoſe of Iſaiah alone. As Iſaiah is the moſt ſublime, David the moſt pleaſing and tender, ſo Job is the moſt deſcriptive, of all the inſpired poets. A peculiar glow of fancy, and ſtrength of deſcription, characteriſe the author. No writer whatever abounds ſo much in metaphors. He may be ſaid not to deſcribe, but to render viſible, whatever he treats of. A variety of inſtances might be given. Let us remark only thoſe ſtrong and lively colours, with which, in the following paſſages taken from the 18th and 20th chapters of his book, he paints the condition of the wicked; obſerve how rapidly his figures riſe before us; and what a deep impreſſion, at the ſame time, they leave on the imagination. "Knoweſt thou not this of old, "ſince man was placed upon the earth, that the triumphing "of the wicked is ſhort, and the joy of the hypocrite, but for "a moment? Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach the clouds, yet he ſhall periſh for"ever. He ſhall fly away as a dream, and ſhall not be found; "yea, he ſhall be chaſed away, as a viſion of the night. The "eye alſo which ſaw him, ſhall ſee him no more; they which "have ſeen him, ſhall ſay, Where is he?—He ſhall ſuck the "poiſon of aſps; the viper's tongue ſhall ſlay him. In the "fulneſs of his ſufficiency, he ſhall be in ſtraits; every "hand ſhall come upon him. He ſhall flee from the iron "weapon, and the bow of ſteel ſhall ſtrike him through. All

" darkneſs ſhall be hid in his ſecret places. A fire not blown
" ſhall conſume him. The heaven ſhall reveal his iniquity;
" and the earth ſhall riſe up againſt him. The increaſe of his
" houſe ſhall depart. His goods ſhall flow away in the day of
" wrath. The light of the wicked ſhall be put out; the light
" ſhall be dark in his tabernacle. The ſteps of his ſtrength
" ſhall be ſtraitened, and his own counſel ſhall caſt him down.
" For he is caſt into a net, by his own feet. He walketh up-
" on a ſnare. Terrors ſhall make him afraid on every ſide;
" and the robber ſhall prevail againſt him. Brimſtone ſhall be
" ſcattered upon his habitation. His remembrance ſhall periſh
" from the earth, and he ſhall have no name in the ſtreet. He
" ſhall be driven from light into darkneſs. They that come af-
" ter him ſhall be aſtoniſhed at his day. He ſhall drink the
" wrath of the Almighty."[a]

LECTURE

LECTURE XLII.

EPIC POETRY.

It now remains to treat of the two highest kinds of poetical writing, the epic and the dramatic. I begin with the epic. This Lecture shall be employed upon the general principles of that species of composition: after which, I shall take a view of the character and genius of the most celebrated epic poets.

The epic poem is universally allowed to be, of all poetical works, the most dignified, and, at the same time, the most difficult in execution. To contrive a story which shall please and interest all readers, by being at once entertaining, important, and instructive; to fill it with suitable incidents; to enliven it with a variety of characters, and of descriptions; and, throughout a long work, to maintain that propriety of sentiment, and that elevation of style, which the epic character requires, is unquestionably the highest effort of poetical genius. Hence so very few have succeeded in the attempt, that strict critics will hardly allow any other poems to bear the name of epic except the Iliad, and the Æneid.

There is no subject, it must be confessed, on which critics have displayed more pedantry, than on this. By tedious disquisitions, founded on a servile submission to authority, they have given such an air of mystery to a plain subject, as to render it difficult for an ordinary reader to conceive, what an epic poem is. By Bossu's definition, it is a discourse invented by art, purely to form the manners of men, by means of instructions disguised under the allegory of some important action, which is related in verse. This definition would suit several of Æsop's Fables, if they were somewhat

somewhat extended, and put into verse: and, accordingly, to illustrate his definition, the critic draws a parallel, in form, between the construction of one of Æsop's Fables, and the plan of Homer's Iliad. The first thing, says he, which either a writer of fables, or of heroic poems, does, is, to choose some maxim or point of morality; to inculcate which, is to be the design of his work. Next, he invents a general story, or a series of facts, without any names, such as he judges will be most proper for illustrating his intended moral. Lastly, he particularises his story; that is, if he be a fabulist, he introduces his dog, his sheep, and his wolf; or if he be an epic poet, he looks out in ancient history for some proper names of heroes to give to his actors; and then his plan is completed.

This is one of the most frigid and absurd ideas that ever entered into the mind of a critic. Homer, he says, saw the Grecians divided into a great number of independent states; but very often obliged to unite into one body against their common enemies. The most useful instruction which he could give them in this situation, was, that a misunderstanding between princes is the ruin of the common cause. In order to enforce this instruction, he contrived, in his own mind, such a general story as this. Several princes join in a confederacy against their enemy. The prince who was chosen as the leader of the rest, affronts one of the most valiant of the confederates, who thereupon withdraws himself, and refuses to take part in the common enterprize. Great misfortunes are the consequence of this division; till, at length, both parties having suffered by the quarrel, the offended prince forgets his displeasure, and is reconciled to the leader; and union being once restored, there ensues complete victory over their enemies. Upon this general plan of his fable, adds Bossu, it was of no great consequence, whether, in filling it up, Homer had employed the names of beasts, like Æsop, or of men. He would have been equally instructive either way. But as he rather fancied to write of heroes, he pitched upon the war of Troy for the scene of his fable; he feigned such an action to [illegible]pen there; he gave the name of Agamemnon to the com[illegible] leader; that of Achilles, to the offended prince; and so [illegible] Iliad arose.

He that can believe Homer to have proceeded in this manner, may believe any thing. One may pronounce, with great certainty, that an author who should compose according to such a plan; who should arrange all the subject in his own mind, with a view to the moral, before he had ever thought of the personages who were to be his actors, might write, perhaps, useful fables for children; but as to an epic poem, if he adventured to think of one, it would be such as would find few readers. No person of any taste can entertain a doubt, that the first objects which strike an epic poet are, the hero whom he is to celebrate, and the action, or story, which is to be the ground-work of his poem. He does not sit down, like a philosopher, to form the plan of a treatise of morality. His genius is fired by some great enterprize, which, to him, appears noble and interesting; and which, therefore, he pitches upon, as worthy of being celebrated in the highest strain of poetry. There is no subject of this kind, but will always afford some general moral instruction, arising from it naturally. The instruction which Bossu points out, is certainly suggested by the Iliad; and there is another which arises as naturally, and may just as well be assigned for the moral of that poem; namely, that Providence avenges those who have suffered injustice; but that when they allow their resentment to carry them too far, it brings misfortunes upon themselves. The subject of the poem is the wrath of Achilles, caused by the injustice of Agamemnon. Jupiter avenges Achilles by giving success to the Trojans against Agamemnon; but by continuing obstinate in his resentment, Achilles loses his beloved friend Patroclus.

The plain account of the nature of an epic poem, is, the recital of some illustrious enterprise in a poetical form. This is as exact a definition, as there is any occasion for on this subject. It comprehends several other poems besides the Iliad of Homer, the Æneid of Virgil, and the Jerusalem of Tasso; which are, perhaps, the three most regular and complete epic works that ever were composed. But to exclude all poems from the epic class, which are not formed exactly upon the same model as these, is the pedantry of criticism. We can give exact definitions and descriptions of minerals, plants, and animals; and can arrange them with precision, under the different classes to

which they belong, because nature affords a visible unvarying standard, to which we refer them. But with regard to works of taste and imagination, where nature has fixed no standard, but leaves scope for beauties of many different kinds, it is absurd to attempt defining, and limiting them, with the same precision. Criticism, when employed in such attempts, degenerates into trifling questions about words and names only. I therefore have no scruple to class such poems, as Milton's Paradise Lost, Lucan's Pharsalia, Statius's Thebaid, Ossian's Fingal and Temora, Camoen's Lusiad, Voltaire's Henriade, Cambray's Telemachus, Glover's Leonidas, Wilkie's Epigoniad, under the same species of composition with the Iliad and the Æneid; though some of them approach much nearer than others, to the perfection of those celebrated works. They are, undoubtedly, all epic; that is, poetical recitals of great adventures; which is all that is meant by this denomination of poetry.

Though I cannot, by any means, allow, that it is the essence of an epic poem to be wholly an allegory, or a fable contrived to illustrate some moral truth, yet it is certain, that no poetry is of a more moral nature than this. Its effect in promoting virtue, is not to be measured by any one maxim, or instruction, which results from the whole story, like the moral of one of Æsop's fables. This is a poor and trivial view of the advantage to be derived from perusing a long epic work, that, at the end we shall be able to gather from it some commonplace morality. Its effect arises from the impression which the parts of the poem separately, as well as the whole taken together, make upon the mind of the reader; from the great examples which it sets before us, and the high sentiments with which it warms our hearts. The end which it proposes is to extend our ideas of human perfection; or, in other words, to excite admiration. Now this can be accomplished only by proper representations of heroic deeds and virtuous characters. For high virtue is the object, which all mankind are formed to admire; and, therefore, epic poems are, and must be, favourable to the cause of virtue. Valour, truth, justice, fidelity, friendship, piety, magnanimity, are the objects which, in the course of such compositions, are presented to our minds, under the most splendid and honourable colours. In behalf of virtuous personages,

personages, our affections are engaged; in their designs, and their distresses, we are interested; the generous and public affections are awakened; the mind is purified from sensual and mean pursuits, and accustomed to take part in great heroic enterprises. It is indeed no small testimony in honour of virtue, that several of the most refined and elegant entertainments of mankind, such as that species of poetical composition which we now consider, must be grounded on moral sentiments and impressions. This is a testimony of such weight, that, were it in the power of sceptical philosophers, to weaken the force of those reasonings which establish the essential distinction between vice and virtue, the writings of epic poets alone were sufficient to refute their false philosophy; showing by that appeal which they constantly make to the feelings of mankind in favour of virtue, that the foundations of it are laid, deep and strong, in human nature.

The general strain and spirit of epic composition, sufficiently mark its distinction from the other kinds of poetry. In pastoral writing, the reigning idea is, innocence and tranquillity. Compassion, is the great object of tragedy; ridicule, the province of comedy. The predominant character of the epic, is admiration excited by heroic actions. It is sufficiently distinguished from history, both by its poetical form, and the liberty of fiction which it assumes. It is a more calm composition than tragedy. It admits, nay requires, the pathetic and the violent, on particular occasions; but the pathetic is not expected to be its general character. It requires more than any other species of poetry, a grave, equal, and supported dignity. It takes in a greater compass of time and action, than dramatic writing admits; and thereby allows a more full display of characters. Dramatic writing displays characters chiefly by means of sentiments and passions; epic poetry, chiefly by means of actions. The emotions, therefore, which it raises, are not so violent, but they are more prolonged. These are the general characteristics of this species of composition. But, in order to give a more particular and critical view of it, let us consider the epic poem under three heads; first, with respect to the subject, or [illegible]n; secondly, with respect to the actors or characters; and [illegible]tly, with respect to the narration of the poet.

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The action, or subject of the epic poem, must have three properties: it must be one; it must be great; it must be interesting.

First, it must be one action, or enterprise, which the poet chooses for his subject. I have frequently had occasion to remark the importance of unity, in many kinds of composition in order to make a full and strong impression upon the mind. With the highest reason, Aristotle insists upon this, as essential to epic poetry; and it is, indeed, the most material of all his rules respecting it. For it is certain, that, in the recital of heroic adventures, several scattered and independent facts can never affect a reader so deeply, nor engage his attention so strongly, as a tale that is one and connected, where the several incidents hang upon one another, and are all made to conspire for the accomplishment of one end. In a regular epic, the more this unity is rendered sensible to the imagination, the effect will be the better; and, for this reason, as Aristotle has observed, it is not sufficient for the poet to confine himself to the actions of one man, or to those which happened during a certain period of time; but the unity must lie in the subject itself; and arise from all the parts combining into one whole.

In all the great epic poems, unity of action is sufficiently apparent. Virgil, for instance, has chosen for his subject, the establishment of Æneas in Italy. From the beginning to the end of the poem, this object is ever in our view, and links all the parts of it together with full connexion. The unity of the Odyssey is of the same nature; the return and re-establishment of Ulysses in his own country. The subject of Tasso, is the recovery of Jerusalem from the Infidels; that of Milton, the expulsion of our first parents from Paradise; and both of them are unexceptionable in the unity of the story. The professed subject of the Iliad, is the anger of Achilles, with the consequences which it produced. The Greeks carry on many unsuccessful engagements against the Trojans, as long as they are deprived of the assistance of Achilles. Upon his being appeased and reconciled to Agamemnon, victory follows, and the poem closes. It must be owned, however, that the unity, or connecting principle, is not quite so sensible to the imagination here, as in the Æneid. For, throughout many books of the Iliad, Achilles is out of sight; he is lost in inaction, and the fancy terminates on no

other

other object, than the success of the two armies whom we see contending in war.

The unity of the epic action is not to be so strictly interpreted, as if it excluded all episodes, or subordinate actions. It is necessary to observe here, that the term episode is employed by Aristotle, in a different sense from what we now give to it. It was a term originally applied to dramatic poetry, and thence transferred to epic; and by episodes, in an epic poem, it would seem that Aristotle understood the extension of the general fable, or plan of the poem, into all its circumstances. What his meaning was, is indeed not very clear; and this obscurity has occasioned much altercation among critical writers. Bossu, in particular, is so perplexed upon this subject, as to be unintelligible. But, dismissing so fruitless a controversy, what we now understand by episodes, are certain actions, or incidents, introduced into the narration, connected with the principal action, yet not so essential to it, as to destroy, if they had been omitted, the main subject of the poem. Of this nature are the interview of Hector with Andromache, in the Iliad; the story of Cacus, and that of Nisus and Euryalus, in the Æneid; the adventures of Tancred with Erminia and Clorinda, in the Jerusalem; and the prospect of his descendants exhibited to Adam, in the last books of Paradise Lost.

Such episodes as these, are not only permitted to an epic poet, but, provided they be properly executed, are great ornaments to his work. The rules regarding them are the following:

First, they must be naturally introduced; they must have a sufficient connexion with the subject of the poem; they must seem inferior parts that belong to it; not mere appendages stuck to it. The episode of Olindo and Sophronia, in the second book of Tasso's Jerusalem, is faulty, by transgressing this rule. It is too detached from the rest of the work; and, being introduced so near the opening of the poem, misleads the reader into an expectation, that it is to be of some future consequence; whereas, it proves to be connected with nothing that follows. In proportion as any episode is slightly related to the main subject, it should always be the shorter. The passion of Dido in the Æneid, and the snares of Armida in the Jerusalem, which

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are expanded so fully in these poems, cannot, with propriety, be called episodes. They are constituent parts of the work, and form a considerable share of the intrigue of the poem.

In the next place, episodes ought to present to us objects of a different kind from those which go before, and those which follow, in the course of the poem. For, it is principally for the sake of variety, that episodes are introduced into an epic composition. In so long a work, they tend to diversify the subject, and to relieve the reader, by shifting the scene. In the midst of combats, therefore, an episode of the martial kind would be out of place; whereas, Hector's visit to Andromache in the Iliad, and Erminia's adventure with the shepherd in the seventh book of the Jerusalem, afford us a well-judged and pleasing retreat from camps and battles.

Lastly, as an episode is a professed embellishment, it ought to be particularly elegant and well finished; and, accordingly, it is, for the most part, in pieces of this kind, that poets put forth their strength. The episodes of Teribazus and Ariana, in Leonidas, and of the death of Hercules, in the Epigoniad, are the two greatest beauties in these poems.

The unity of the epic action necessarily supposes, that the action be entire and complete; that is, as Aristotle well expresses it, that it have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Either by relating the whole, in his own person, or by introducing some of his actors to relate what had passed before the opening of the poem, the author must always contrive to give us full information of every thing that belongs to his subject; he must not leave our curiosity, in any article, ungratified; he must bring us precisely to the accomplishment of his plan; and then conclude.

The second property of the epic action, is, that it be great; that it have sufficient splendour and importance, both to fix our attention, and to justify the magnificent apparatus which the poet bestows upon it. This is so evidently requisite as not to require illustration; and, indeed, hardly any who have attempted epic poetry, have failed in choosing some subject sufficiently important, either by the nature of the action, or by the fame of the personages concerned in it.

It contributes to the grandeur of the epic subject, that it be not of a modern date, nor fall within any period of history with

with which we are intimately acquainted. Both Lucan and Voltaire have, in the choice of their subjects, transgressed this rule, and they have, upon that account, succeeded worse. Antiquity is favourable to those high and august ideas, which epic poetry is designed to raise. It tends to aggrandise, in our imagination, both persons and events; and what is still more material, it allows the poet the liberty of adorning his subject by means of fiction. Whereas, as soon as he comes within the verge of real and authenticated history, this liberty is abridged. He must either confine himself wholly, as Lucan has done, to strict historical truth, at the expense of rendering his story jejune; or if he goes beyond it, like Voltaire in his Henriade, this disadvantage follows, that, in well-known events, the true and the fictitious parts of the plan do not naturally mingle, and incorporate with each other. These observations cannot be applied to dramatic writing; where the personages are exhibited to us, not so much that we may admire, as that we may love or pity them. Such passions are much more consistent with the familiar historical knowledge of the persons who are to be the objects of them; and even require them to be displayed in the light, and with the failings, of ordinary men. Modern, and well-known history, therefore, may furnish very proper materials for tragedy. But for epic poetry, where heroism is the ground-work, and where the object in view is to excite admiration, ancient or traditionary history is assuredly the safest region. There, the author may lay hold on names, and characters, and events, not wholly unknown, on which to build his story, while, at the same time, by reason of the distance of the period, or of the remoteness of the scene, sufficient license is left him for fiction and invention.

The third property required in the epic poem, is, that it be interesting. It is not sufficient for this purpose that it be great. For deeds of mere valour, how heroic soever, may prove cold and tiresome. Much will depend on the happy choice of some subject, which shall, by its nature, interest the public; as when poet selects for his hero, one who is the founder, or the -erer, or the favourite of his nation; or when he writes of vements that have been highly celebrated, or have been ected with important consequences to any public cause.

Most

Most of the great epic poems are abundantly fortunate in this respect, and must have been very interesting to those ages and countries in which they were composed.

But the chief circumstance which renders an epic poem interesting, and which tends to interest, not one age or country alone, but all readers, is the skilful conduct of the author in the management of his subject. He must so contrive his plan, as that it shall comprehend many affecting incidents. He must not dazzle us perpetually with valiant achievements; for all readers tire of constant fighting, and battles; but he must study to touch our hearts. He may sometimes be awful and august; he must often be tender and pathetic; he must give us gentle and pleasing scenes of love, friendship, and affection. The more that an epic poem abounds with situations which awaken the feelings of humanity, it is the more interesting; and these form, always, the favourite passages of the work. I know no epic poets so happy in this respect as Virgil and Tasso.

Much, too, depends on the characters of the heroes, for rendering the poem interesting; that they be such, as shall strongly attach the readers, and make them take part in the dangers which the heroes encounter. These dangers, or obstacles, form what is called the nodus, or the intrigue of the epic poem; in the judicious conduct of which, consists much of the poet's art. He must rouse our attention, by a prospect of the difficulties which seem to threaten disappointment to the enterprize of his favourite personages; he must make these difficulties grow and thicken upon us by degrees, till, after having kept us, for some time, in a state of agitation and suspense, he paves the way, by a proper preparation of incidents, for the winding up of the plot in a natural and probable manner. It is plain, that every tale which is designed to engage attention, must be conducted on a plan of this sort.

A question has been moved, Whether the nature of the epic poem does not require that it should always end successfully? Most critics incline to think, that a successful issue is the most proper; and they appear to have reason on their side. An unhappy conclusion depresses the mind, and is opposite to the elevating emotions which belong to this species of poetry. Terror and compassion are the proper subjects of tragedy; but as the

the epic poem is of larger compaſs and extent, it were too much, if, after the difficulties and troubles which commonly abound in the progreſs of the poem, the author ſhould bring them all at laſt to an unfortunate iſſue. Accordingly, the general practice of epic poets is on the ſide of a proſperous concluſion; not, however, without ſome exceptions. For two authors of great name, Lucan and Milton, have held a contrary courſe; the one concluding with the ſubverſion of the Roman liberty; the other, with the expulſion of man from paradiſe.

With regard to the time or duration of the epic action, no preciſe boundaries can be aſcertained. A conſiderable extent is always allowed to it, as it does not neceſſarily depend on thoſe violent paſſions which can be ſuppoſed to have only a ſhort continuance. The Iliad, which is formed upon the anger of Achilles, has, with propriety, the ſhorteſt duration of any of the great epic poems. According to Boſſu, the action laſts no longer than forty-ſeven days. The action of the Odyſſey, computed from the taking of Troy to the peace of Ithaca, extends to eight years and a half; and the action of the Æneid, computed in the ſame way, from the taking of Troy to the death of Turnus, includes about ſix years. But if we meaſure the period only of the poet's own narration, or compute from the time in which the hero makes his firſt appearance, till the concluſion, the duration of both theſe laſt poems is brought within a much ſmaller compaſs. The Odyſſey beginning with Ulyſſes in the iſland of Calypſo, comprehends fifty-eight days only; and the Æneid, beginning with the ſtorm, which throws Æneas upon the coaſt of Africa, is reckoned to include, at the moſt, a year and ſome months.

Having thus treated of the epic action, or the ſubject of the poem, I proceed next to make ſome obſervations on the actors or perſonages.

As it is the buſineſs of an epic poet to copy after nature, and to form a probable intereſting tale, he muſt ſtudy to give all his perſonages proper and well-ſupported characters, such ...ay the features of human nature. This is what Ariſ...s, giving manners to the poem. It is by no means ..., that all his actors be morally good; imperfect, nay, ...us characters may find a proper place; though the nature

of epic poetry seems to require, that the principal figures exhibited should be such as tend to raise admiration and love, rather than hatred or contempt. But whatever the character be which a poet gives to any of his actors, he must take care to preserve it uniform, and consistent with itself. Every thing which that person says, or does, must be suited to it, and must serve to distinguish him from any other.

Poetic characters may be divided into two kinds, general and particular. General characters are, such as wise, brave, virtuous, without any farther distinction. Particular characters express the species of bravery, of wisdom, of virtue, for which any one is eminent. They exhibit the peculiar features which distinguish one individual from another, which mark the difference of the same moral quality in different men, according as it is combined with other dispositions in their temper. In drawing such particular characters, genius is chiefly exerted. How far each of the three great epic poets have distinguished themselves in this part of composition, I shall have occasion afterwards to show, when I come to make remarks upon their works. It is sufficient now to mention, that it is in this part Homer has principally excelled; Tasso has come the nearest to Homer; and Virgil has been the most deficient.

It has been the practice of all epic poets, to select some one personage, whom they distinguish above all the rest, and make the hero of the tale. This is considered as essential to epic composition, and is attended with several advantages. It renders the unity of the subject more sensible, when there is one principal figure, to which, as to a centre, all the rest refer. It tends to interest us more in the enterprise which is carried on; and it gives the poet an opportunity of exerting his talents for adorning, and displaying one character, with peculiar splendor. It has been asked, Who then is the hero of Paradise Lost? The devil, it has been answered by some critics; and, in consequence of this idea, much ridicule and censure has been thrown upon Milton. But they have mistaken that author's intention, by proceeding upon a supposition, that, in the conclusion of the poem, the hero must needs be triumphant. Whereas Milton followed a different plan, and has given a tragic conclusion to a poem, otherwise epic in its form. For Adam is undoubte-

his hero; that is, the capital and most interesting figure in his poem.

Besides human actors, there are personages of another kind, that usually occupy no small place in epic poetry; I mean the gods, or supernatural beings. This brings us to the consideration of what is called the machinery of the epic poem; the most nice and difficult part of the subject. Critics appear to me to have gone to extremes, on both sides. Almost all the French critics decide in favour of machinery, as essential to the constitution of an epic poem. They quote that sentence of Petronius Arbiter, as if it were an oracle, "per ambages, Deorumque ministeria præcipitandus est liber spiritus," and hold, that though a poem had every other requisite that could be demanded, yet it could not be ranked in the epic class, unless the main action was carried on by the intervention of the gods. This decision seems to be founded on no principle or reason whatever, unless a superstitious reverence for the practice of Homer and Virgil. These poets very properly embellished their story by the traditional tales and popular legends of their own country; according to which, all the great transactions of the heroic times were intermixed with the fables of their deities. But does it thence follow, that in other countries, and other ages, where there is not the like advantage of current superstition, and popular credulity, epic poetry must be wholly confined to antiquated fictions, and fairy tales? Lucan has composed a very spirited poem, certainly of the epic kind, where neither gods nor supernatural beings are at all employed. The author of Leonidas has made an attempt of the same kind, not without success; and beyond doubt, wherever a poet gives us a regular heroic story, well connected in its parts, adorned with characters, and supported with proper dignity and elevation, though his agents be every one of them human, he has fulfilled the chief requisites of this sort of composition, and has a just title to be classed with epic writers.

But though I cannot admit that machinery is necessary or essential to the epic plan, neither can I agree with some late critics of considerable name, who are for excluding it totally, as inconsistent with that probability and impression of reality, which,

they

they think, should reign in this kind of writing.* Mankind do not consider poetical writings with so philosophical an eye. They seek entertainment from them; and for the bulk of readers, indeed for almost all men, the marvellous has a great charm. It gratifies and fills the imagination; and gives room for many a striking and sublime description. In epic poetry, in particular, where admiration and lofty ideas are supposed to reign, the marvellous and supernatural find, if any where, their proper place. They both enable the poet to aggrandize his subject, by means of those august and solemn objects which religion introduces into it; and they allow him to enlarge and diversify his plan, by comprehending within it heaven, and earth, and hell, men and invisible beings, and the whole circle of the universe.

At the same time, in the use of this supernatural machinery, it becomes a poet to be temperate and prudent. He is not at liberty to invent what system of the marvellous he pleases. It must always have some foundation in popular belief. He must avail himself in a decent manner, either of the religious faith, or the superstitious credulity of the country wherein he lives, or of which he writes, so as to give an air of probability to events which are most contrary to the common course of nature. Whatever machinery he employs, he must take care not to overload us with it; not to withdraw human actions and manners too much from view, nor to obscure them under a cloud of incredible fictions. He must always remember, that his chief business is to relate to men, the actions and exploits of men; that it is by these principally he is to interest us, and to touch our hearts; and that if probability be altogether banished from his work, it can never make a deep or a lasting impression. Indeed, I know nothing more difficult in epic poetry, than to adjust properly the mixture of the marvellous with the probable; so as to gratify and amuse us with the one, without sacrificing the other. I need hardly observe, that these observations affect not the conduct of Milton's work; whose plan being altogether theological, his supernatural beings form not the machinery, but are the principal actors in the poem.

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* See Elements of Criticism, ch. 22.

With regard to allegorical personages, fame, discord, love, and the like, it may be safely pronounced, that they form the worst machinery of any. In description they are sometimes allowable, and may serve for embellishment; but they should never be permitted to bear any share in the action of the poem. For being plain and declared fictions, mere names of general ideas, to which even fancy cannot attribute any existence as persons, if they are introduced as mingling with human actors, an intolerable confusion of shadows and realities arises, and all consistency of action is utterly destroyed.

In the narration of the poet, which is the last head that remains to be considered, it is not material, whether he relate the whole story in his own character, or introduce some of his personages to relate any part of the action that had passed before the poem opens. Homer follows the one method in his Iliad, and the other in his Odyssey. Virgil has, in this respect, imitated the conduct of the Odyssey; Tasso that of the Iliad. The chief advantage which arises from any of the actors being employed to relate part of the story, is, that it allows the poet, if he chooses it, to open with some interesting situation of affairs, informing us afterwards of what had passed before that period; and gives him the greater liberty of spreading out such parts of the subject as he inclines to dwell upon in person, and of comprehending the rest within a short recital. Where the subject is of great extent, and comprehends the transactions of several years, as in the Odyssey and the Æneid, this method therefore seems preferable. When the subject is of a smaller compass, and shorter duration, as in the Iliad and the Jerusalem, the poet may, without disadvantage, relate the whole in his own person, according as is done in both these poems.

In the proposition of the subject, the invocation of the muse, and other ceremonies of the introduction, poets may vary at their pleasure. It is perfectly trifling to make these little formalities the object of precise rule, any farther, than that the subject of the work should always be clearly proposed, and without affected or unsuitable pomp. For, according to Horace's noted rule, no introduction should ever set out too high, or promise too much, lest the author should not fulfil the expectations he has raised.

What

What is of most importance in the tenor of the narration is, that it be perspicuous, animated, and enriched with all the beauties of poetry. No sort of composition requires more strength, dignity, and fire, than the epic poem. It is the region within which we look for every thing that is sublime in description, tender in sentiment, and bold and lively in expression; and therefore, though an author's plan should be faultless, and his story ever so well conducted, yet if he be feeble, or flat in style, destitute of affecting scenes, and deficient in poetical colouring, he can have no success. The ornaments which epic poetry admits, must all be of the grave and chaste kind. Nothing that is loose, ludicrous, or affected, finds any place there. All the objects which it presents ought to be either great, or tender, or pleasing. Descriptions of disgusting or shocking objects, should as much as possible be avoided; and therefore the fable of the Harpies, in the third book of the Æneid, and the allegory of Sin and Death, in the second book of Paradise Lost, had been better omitted in these celebrated poems.

LECTURE

LECTURE XLIII.

HOMER's ILIAD AND ODYSSEY. VIRGIL's ÆNEID.

As the epic poem is universally allowed to possess the highest rank among poetical works, it merits a particular discussion. Having treated of the nature of this composition, and the principal rules relating to it, I proceed to make some observations on the most distinguished epic poems, ancient and modern.

Homer claims, on every account, our first attention, as the father not only of epic, but, in some measure, of poetry in general. Whoever sits down to read Homer, must consider that he is going to read the most ancient book in the world, next to the Bible. Without making this reflection, he cannot enter into the spirit, nor relish the composition of the author. He is not to look for the correctness and elegance of the Augustan age. He must divest himself of our modern ideas of dignity and refinement; and transport his imagination almost three thousand years back in the history of mankind. What he is to expect, is a picture of the ancient world. He must reckon upon finding characters and manners, that retain a considerable tincture of the savage state; moral ideas, as yet imperfectly formed; and the appetites and passions of men brought under none of those restraints, to which, in a more advanced state of society, they are accustomed. But bodily strength, prized as one of the chief heroic endowments; the preparing of a meal, and the appeasing of hunger, described as very interesting objects; and the heroes boasting of themselves openly, scolding one another outrageously, and glorying, as we would now think very indecently, over their fallen enemies.

The opening of the Iliad possesses none of that sort of dignity, which a modern looks for in a great epic poem. It turns on

on no higher ſubject, than the quarrel of two chieftains about a female ſlave. The prieſt of Apollo beſeeches Agamemnon to reſtore his daughter, who, in the plunder of a city, had fallen to Agamemnon's ſhare of booty. He refuſes. Apollo, at the prayer of his prieſt, ſends a plague into the Grecian camp. The augur, when conſulted, declares, that there is no way of appeaſing Apollo, but by reſtoring the daughter of his prieſt. Agamemnon is enraged at the augur; profeſſes that he likes his ſlave better than his wife Clytemneſtra; but ſince he muſt reſtore her in order to ſave the army, inſiſts to have another in her place; and pitches upon Briſeis, the ſlave of Achilles. Achilles, as was to be expected, kindles into rage at this demand; reproaches him for his rapacity and inſolence, and, after giving him many hard names, ſolemnly ſwears, that, if he is to be thus treated by the general, he will withdraw his troops, and aſſiſt the Grecians no more againſt the Trojans. He withdraws accordingly. His mother, the goddeſs Thetis, intereſts Jupiter in his cauſe; who, to revenge the wrong which Achilles had ſuffered, takes part againſt the Greeks; and ſuffers them to fall into great and long diſtreſs; until Achilles is pacified; and reconciliation brought about between him and Agamemnon.

Such is the baſis of the whole action of the Iliad. Hence riſe all thoſe "ſpecioſa miracula," as Horace terms them, which fill that extraordinary poem; and which have had the power of intereſting almoſt all the nations of Europe, during every age, ſince the days of Homer. The general admiration commanded by a poetical plan, ſo very different from what any one would have formed in our times, ought not, upon reflection, to be matter of ſurpriſe. For, beſides that a fertile genius can enrich and beautify any ſubject on which it is employed, it is to be obſerved, that ancient manners, how much ſoever they contradict our preſent notions of dignity and refinement, afford, nevertheleſs, materials for poetry, ſuperior, in ſome reſpects, to thoſe which are furniſhed by a more poliſhed ſtate of ſociety. They diſcover human nature more open and undiſguiſed, without any of thoſe ſtudied forms of behaviour which now conceal men from one another. They give free ſcope to the ſtrongeſt and moſt impetuous emotions of the mind, which

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make a better figure in description, than calm and temperate feelings. They show us our native prejudices, appetites and desires, exerting themselves without control. From this state of manners, joined with the advantages of that strong and expressive style, which, as I formerly observed, commonly distinguishes the compositions of early ages, we have ground to look for more of the boldness, ease and freedom of native genius, in compositions of such a period, than in those of more civilized times. And, accordingly, the two great characters of the Homeric poetry are, fire and simplicity. Let us now proceed to make some more particular observations on the Iliad, under the three heads of the subject and action, the characters, and narration of the poet.

The subject of the Iliad must unquestionably be admitted to be, in the main, happily chosen. In the days of Homer, no object could be more splendid and dignified than the Trojan war. So great a confederacy of the Grecian states, under one leader; and the ten years' siege which they carried on against Troy, must have spread far abroad the renown of many military exploits, and interested all Greece in the traditions concerning the heroes who had most eminently signalized themselves. Upon these traditions, Homer grounded his poem; and though he lived, as is generally believed, only two or three centuries after the Trojan war, yet, through the want of written records, tradition must, by this time, have fallen into the degree of obscurity most proper for poetry; and have left him at full liberty to mix as much fable as he pleased, with the remains of true history. He has not chosen, for his subject, the whole Trojan war; but, with great judgment, he has selected one part of it, the quarrel betwixt Achilles and Agamemnon, and the events to which that quarrel gave rise; which, though they take up forty-seven days only, yet include the most interesting, and most critical period of the war. By this management, he has given greater unity to what would have otherwise been an unconnected history of battles. He has gained one hero, or principal character, Achilles, who reigns throughout the work; and he has shewn the pernicious effect of discord among confederated princes. At the same time, I admit that Homer is less fortunate in his subject than Virgil. The

 plan

plan of the Æneid includes a greater compass, and a more agreeable diversity of events; whereas the Iliad is almost entirely filled with battles.

The praise of high invention has in every age been given to Homer, with the greatest reason. The prodigious number of incidents, of speeches, of characters divine and human, with which he abounds; the surprising variety with which he has diversified his battles, in the wounds and deaths, and little history pieces of almost all the persons slain, discover an invention next to boundless. But the praise of judgment is, in my opinion, no less due to Homer, than that of invention. His story is all along conducted with great art. He rises upon us gradually; his heroes are brought out, one after another, to be objects of our attention. The distress thickens, as the poem advances; and every thing is so contrived, as to aggrandize Achilles, and to render him, as the poet intended he should be, the capital figure.

But that wherein Homer excels all writers, is the characteristical part. Here, he is without a rival. His lively and spirited exhibition of characters, is, in a great measure, owing to his being so dramatic a writer, abounding every where with dialogue and conversation. There is much more dialogue in Homer than in Virgil; or, indeed, than in any other poet. What Virgil informs us of by two words of narration, Homer brings about by a speech. We may observe here, that this method of writing is more ancient than the narrative manner. Of this we have a clear proof in the Books of the Old Testament, which, instead of narration, abound with speeches, with answers and replies, upon the most familiar subjects. Thus, in the Book of Genesis: "Joseph said unto his brethren, "Whence come ye? and they answered, From the land of Canaan we come to buy food. And Joseph said, Ye are spies; "to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they "said unto him, Nay, my Lord, but to buy food are thy servants come; we are all one man's sons, we are true men, "thy servants are no spies. And he said unto them, Nay, but "to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they "said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one "man in the land of Canaan; and behold the youngest is this "day with our father; and one is not. And Joseph said unto "them,

"them, This it is that I spake unto you, saying ye are spies. "Hereby ye shall be proved; by the life of Pharaoh, ye shall "not go forth, except your youngest brother come hither, &c." Genesis xlii. 7—15. Such a style as this, is the most simple and artless form of writing; and must, therefore, undoubtedly have been the most ancient. It is copying directly from nature; giving a plain rehearsal of what passed, or was supposed to pass, in conversation between the persons of whom the author treats. In progress of time, when the art of writing was more studied, it was thought more elegant to compress the substance of conversation into short distinct narrative, made by the poet or historian in his own person; and to reserve direct speeches for solemn occasions only.

The ancient dramatic method which Homer practised, has some advantages, balanced with some defects. It renders composition more natural and animated, and more expressive of manners and characters; but withal less grave and majestic, and sometimes tiresome. Homer, it must be admitted, has carried his propensity to the making of speeches too far; and if he be tedious any where, it is in these; some of them trifling, and some of them plainly unseasonable. Together with the Greek vivacity, he leaves upon our minds some impression of the Greek loquacity also. His speeches, however, are upon the whole characteristic and lively; and to them we owe, in a great measure, that admirable display which he has given of human nature. Every one who reads him, becomes familiarly and intimately acquainted with his heroes. We seem to have lived among them, and to have conversed with them. Not only has he pursued the single virtue of courage through all its different forms and features, in his different warriors; but some more delicate characters, into which courage either enters not at all, or but for an inconsiderable part, he has drawn with singular art.

How finely, for instance, has he painted the character of Helen, so as, notwithstanding her frailty and her crimes, to prevent her from being an odious object! The admiration with which the old generals behold her, in the third book, when she is coming towards them, presents her to us with much dignity. Her veiling herself and shedding tears, her confusion in the pres-

ence

ence of Priam, her grief and self-accusations at the sight of Menelaus, her upbraiding of Paris for his cowardice, and, at the same time, her returning fondness for him, exhibit the most striking features of that mixed female character, which we partly condemn, and partly pity. Homer never introduces her, without making her say something to move our compassion; while, at the same time, he takes care to contrast her character with that of a virtuous matron, in the chaste and tender Andromache.

Paris himself, the author of all the mischief, is characterised with the utmost propriety. He is, as we would expect him, a mixture of gallantry and effeminacy. He retreats from Menelaus, on his first appearance; but, immediately afterwards, enters into single combat with him. He is a great master of civility, remarkably courteous in his speeches; and receives all the reproofs of his brother Hector with modesty and deference. He is described as a person of elegance and taste. He was the architect of his own palace. He is, in the sixth book, found by Hector, burnishing and dressing up his armour; and issues forth to battle with a peculiar gaiety and ostentation of appearance, which is illustrated by one of the finest comparisons in all the Iliad, that of the horse prancing to the river.

Homer has been blamed for making his hero Achilles of too brutal and unamiable a character. But I am inclined to think, that injustice is commonly done to Achilles, upon the credit of two lines of Horace, who has certainly overloaded his character.

> Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
> Jura negat sibi nata; nihil non arrogat armis.

Achilles is passionate, indeed, to a great degree; but he is far from being a contemner of laws and justice. In the contest with Agamemnon, though he carries it on with too much heat, yet he has reason on his side. He was notoriously wronged; but he submits, and resigns Briseis peaceably, when the heralds come to demand her; only, he will fight no longer under the command of a leader who had affronted him. Besides his wonderful bravery and contempt of death, he has several other qualities of a hero. He is open and sincere. He loves his subjects, and respects the gods. He is distinguished by strong friendships

friendships and attachments; he is, throughout, high spirited, gallant, and honourable; and allowing for a degree of ferocity which belonged to the times, and enters into the characters of most of Homer's heroes, he is, upon the whole, abundantly fitted to raise high admiration, though not pure esteem.

Under the head of characters, Homer's gods or his machinery, according to the critical term, come under consideration. The gods make a great figure in the Iliad; much greater indeed than they do in the Æneid, or in any other epic poem; and hence Homer has become the standard of poetic theology. Concerning machinery in general, I delivered my sentiments in the former Lecture. Concerning Homer's machinery, in particular, we must observe, that it was not his own invention. Like every other good poet, he unquestionably followed the traditions of his country. The age of the Trojan war approached to the age of the gods and demi-gods in Greece. Several of the heroes concerned in that war were reputed to be the children of those gods. Of course, the traditionary tales relating to them, and to the exploits of that age, were blended with the fables of the deities. These popular legends, Homer very properly adopted; though it is perfectly absurd to infer from this, that therefore poets arising in succeeding ages, and writing on quite different subjects, are obliged to follow the same system of machinery.

In the hands of Homer, it produces, on the whole, a noble effect; it is always gay and amusing; often, lofty and magnificent. It introduces into his poem a great number of personages, almost as much distinguished by characters as his human actors. It diversifies his battles greatly, by the intervention of the gods; and, by frequently shifting the scene from earth to heaven, it gives an agreeable relief to the mind, in the midst of so much blood and slaughter. Homer's gods, it must be confessed, though they be always lively and animated figures, yet sometimes want dignity. The conjugal contentions between Juno and Jupiter, with which he entertains us, and the indecent squabbles he describes among the inferior deities, according as they take different sides with the contending par- [illegible]ould be very improper models for any modern poet to.

In apology for Homer, however, it must be remembered,

bered, that according to the fables of those days, the gods are but one remove above the condition of men. They have all the human passions. They drink and feast, and are vulnerable like men; they have children and kinsmen in the opposite armies; and bating that they are immortal, that they have houses on the top of Olympus, and winged chariots, in which they are often flying down to earth, and then re-ascending, in order to feast on nectar and ambrosia; they are in truth no higher beings than the human heroes, and therefore very fit to take part in their contentions. At the same time, though Homer so frequently degrades his divinities, yet he knows how to make them appear, in some conjunctures, with the most awful majesty. Jupiter, the father of gods and men, is, for the most part, introduced with great dignity; and several of the most sublime conceptions in the Iliad, are founded on the appearances of Neptune, Minerva, and Apollo, on great occasions.

With regard to Homer's style and manner of writing, it is easy, natural, and, in the highest degree, animated. It will be admired by such only as relish ancient simplicity, and can make allowance for certain negligences and repetitions, which greater refinement in the art of writing has taught succeeding, though far inferior, poets to avoid. For Homer is the most simple in his style of all the great poets, and resembles most the style of the poetical parts of the Old Testament. They can have no conception of his manner, who are acquainted with him in Mr. Pope's translation only. An excellent poetical performance that translation is, and faithful in the main to the original. In some places, it may be thought to have even improved Homer. It has certainly softened some of his rudenesses, and added delicacy and grace to some of his sentiments. But withal, it is no other than Homer modernised. In the midst of the elegance and luxuriancy of Mr. Pope's language, we lose sight of the old bard's simplicity. I know indeed no author, to whom it is more difficult to do justice in a translation, than Homer. As the plainest of his diction, were it literally rendered, would often appear flat in any modern language; so, in the midst of that plainness, and not a little heightened by it, there are every where breaking forth upon us flashes of native fire, of sublimity and beauty, which hardly any language, except his own, could preserve. His versification

has

has been univerſally acknowledged to be uncommonly melodious; and to carry, beyond that of any poet, a reſemblance in the ſound to the ſenſe and meaning.

In narration, Homer is, at all times, remarkably conciſe, which renders him lively and agreeable; though in his ſpeeches, as I have before admitted, ſometimes tedious. He is every where deſcriptive; and deſcriptive by means of thoſe well choſen particulars, which form the excellency of deſcription. Virgil gives us the nod of Jupiter with great magnificence.

Annuit; et totum nutu tremefecit Olympum.

But Homer, in deſcribing the ſame thing, gives us the ſable eye-brows of Jupiter bent, and his ambroſial curls ſhaken, at the moment when he gives the nod; and thereby renders the figure more natural and lively. Whenever he ſeeks to draw our attention to ſome intereſting object, he particulariſes it ſo happily, as to paint it in a manner to our ſight. The ſhot of Pandarus's arrow, which broke the truce between the two armies, as related in the fourth book, may be given for an inſtance; and, above all, the admirable interview of Hector with Andromache, in the ſixth book; where all the circumſtances of conjugal and parental tenderneſs, the child affrighted with the view of his father's helmet and creſt, and clinging to the nurſe; Hector putting off his helmet, taking the child into his arms, and offering up a prayer for him to the gods; Andromache receiving back the child with a ſmile of pleaſure, and at the ſame inſtant burſting into tears, δακρυοεν γελασασα, as it is finely expreſſed in the original, form the moſt natural and affecting picture that can poſſibly be imagined.

In the deſcription of battles, Homer particularly excels. He works up the hurry, the terror, and confuſion of them in ſo maſterly a manner, as to place the reader in the very midſt of the engagement. It is here, that the fire of his genius is moſt highly diſplayed; inſomuch, that Virgil's battles, and indeed thoſe of moſt other poets, are cold and inanimate in compariſon of Homer's.

With regard to ſimiles, no poet abounds ſo much with them. Several of them are beyond doubt extremely beautiful: ſuch as thoſe, of the fires in the Trojan camp compared to the moon and ſtars by night; Paris going forth to battle, to the

war-horſe

war-horse prancing to the river; and Euphorbus slain, to the flowering shrub cut down by a sudden blast: all which are among the finest poetical passages that are any where to be found. I am not, however, of opinion, that Homer's comparisons, taken in general, are his greatest beauties. They come too thick upon us; and often interrupt the train of his narration or description. The resemblance on which they are founded, is sometimes not clear; and the objects whence they are taken, are too uniform. His lions, bulls, eagles, and herds of sheep, recur too frequently; and the allusions in some of his similes, even after the allowances that are to be made for ancient manners, must be admitted to be debasing.*

My observations, hitherto, have been made upon the Iliad only. It is necessary to take some notice of the Odyssey also. Longinus's criticism upon it is not without foundation, that Homer may in this poem be compared to the setting sun, whose grandeur still remains without the heat of his meridian beams. It wants the vigour and sublimity of the Iliad; yet, at the same time, possesses so many beauties, as to be justly entitled to high praise. It is a very amusing poem, and has much greater variety than the Iliad; it contains many interesting stories, and beautiful descriptions. We see every where the same descriptive and dramatic genius, and the same fertility of invention that appears in the other work. It descends indeed from the dignity

* The severest critic upon Homer in modern times, M. la Motte, admits all that his admirers urge for the superiority of his genius and talents as a poet: "C'étoit un génie naturellement Poëtique, ami des Fables & du merveilleux, "et porté en général à l'imitation, soit des objets de la nature, soit des senti-"mens et des actions des hommes. Il avoit l'esprit vaste et fécond; plus élevé "que délicat, plus naturel qu'ingenieux, et plus amoureux de l'abondance que "du choix.—Il a saisi, par une supériorité de gout, les prémieres idées de l'él-"oquence dans toutes les genres; il a parlé le langage de toutes les passions; "et il a du moins ouvert aux écrivains qui doivent le suivre une infinité de "routes qu'il ne restroit plus qu'à applanir. Il y a apparence qu'en quelque "temps qu' Homère eût vecu, il eût été du moins, le plus grand Poëte de son "pais: et à ne le prendre que dans ce sens, on peut dire, qu'il est le maître de "ceux mêmes qui l'ont surpassé." Discours sur Homère. Oeuvres de la Motte. Tome 2d. After these high praises of the author, he indeed endeavours to bring the merit of the Iliad very low. But his principal objections turn on the debasing ideas which are there given of the gods, the gross characters and manners of the heroes, and the imperfect morality of the sentiments: which, as Voltaire observes, is like accusing a painter for having drawn his figures in the dress of the times. Homer painted his gods, such as popular tradition then represented them; and described such characters and sentiments, as he found among those with whom he lived.

dignity of gods, of heroes, and warlike achievements; but in recompenſe, we have more pleaſing pictures of ancient manners. Inſtead of that ferocity which reigns in the Iliad, the Odyſſey preſents us with the moſt amiable images of hoſpitality and humanity; entertains us with many a wonderful adventure, and many a landſcape of nature; and inſtructs us by a conſtant vein of morality and virtue, which runs through the poem.

At the ſame time, there are ſome defects which muſt be acknowledged in the Odyſſey. Many ſcenes in it fall below the majeſty which we naturally expect in an epic poem. The laſt twelve books, after Ulyſſes is landed in Ithaca, are, in ſeveral parts, tedious and languid; and though the diſcovery which Ulyſſes makes of himſelf to his nurſe, Eurycleа, and his interview with Penelope before ſhe knows him, in the nineteenth book, are tender and affecting, yet the poet does not ſeem happy in the great anagnoriſis, or the diſcovery of Ulyſſes to Penelope. She is too cautious and diſtruſtful, and we are diſappointed of the ſurpriſe of joy, which we expected on that high occaſion.

After having ſaid ſo much of the father of epic poety, it is now time to proceed to Virgil, who has a very marked character, quite diſtinct from that of Homer. As the diſtinguiſhing excellencies of the Iliad are, ſimplicity and fire; thoſe of the Æneid are, elegance and tenderneſs. Virgil is, beyond doubt, leſs animated and leſs ſublime than Homer; but to counterbalance this, he has fewer negligences, greater variety, and ſupports more of a correct and regular dignity, throughout his work.

When we begin to read the Iliad, we find ourſelves in the region of the moſt remote, and even unrefined antiquity. When we open the Æneid, we diſcover all the correctneſs, and the improvements of the Auguſtan age. We meet with no contentions of heroes about a female ſlave; no violent ſcolding, nor abuſive language; but the poem opens with the utmoſt magnificence; with Juno, forming deſigns for preventing Æneas's eſtabliſhment in Italy, and Æneas himſelf, preſented to us with all his fleet, in the middle of a ſtorm, which is deſcribed in the higheſt ſtyle of poetry.

The subject of the Æneid is extremely happy; still more so, in my opinion, than either of Homer's poems. As nothing could be more noble; nor carry more of epic dignity, so nothing could be more flattering and interesting to the Roman people, than Virgil's deriving the origin of their state from so famous a hero as Æneas. The object was splendid in itself; it gave the poet a theme, taken from the ancient traditionary history of his own country; it allowed him to connect his subject with Homer's stories, and to adopt all his mythology; it afforded him the opportunity of frequently glancing at all the future great exploits of the Romans, and of describing Italy, and the very territory of Rome, in its ancient and fabulous state. The establishment of Æneas constantly traversed by Juno, leads to a great diversity of events, of voyages, and wars; and furnishes a proper intermixture of the incidents of peace with martial exploits. Upon the whole, I believe, there is no where to be found so complete a model of an epic fable, or story, as Virgil's Æneid. I see no foundation for the opinion, entertained by some critics, that the Æneid is to be considered as an allegorical poem which carries a constant reference to the character and reign of Augustus Cæsar; or, that Virgil's main design in composing the Æneid, was to reconcile the Romans to the government of that prince, who is supposed to be shadowed out under the character of Æneas. Virgil, indeed, like the other poets of that age, takes every opportunity which his subject affords him, of paying court to Augustus.* But, to imagine that he carried a political plan in his view, through the whole poem, appears to me, no more than a fanciful refinement. He had sufficient motives, as a poet, to determine him to the choice of his subject, from its being, in itself, both great and pleasing; from its being suited to his genius, and its being attended with the peculiar advantages, which I mentioned above, for the full display of poetical talents.

Unity of action is perfectly preserved; as, from beginning to end, one main object is always kept in view, the settlement of Æneas, in Italy, by order of the gods. As the story comprehends the transactions of several years, part of the transactions are very properly thrown into a recital made by the hero. The episodes

* As particularly in that noted passage of the 6th book, l. 791.

Hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti sæpius audis, &c.

episodes are linked with sufficient connexion to the main subject; and the nodus, or intrigue of the poem, is, according to the plan of ancient machinery, happily formed. The wrath of Juno, who opposes herself to the Trojan settlement in Italy, gives rise to all the difficulties which obstruct Æneas's undertaking, and connects the human with the celestial operations, throughout the whole work. Hence arise the tempest which throws Æneas upon the shore of Africa; the passion of Dido, who endeavours to detain him at Carthage; and the efforts of Turnus, who opposes him in war. Till, at last, upon a composition made with Jupiter, that the Trojan name shall be for-ever sunk in the Latin, Juno foregoes her resentment, and the hero becomes victorious.

In these main points, Virgil has conducted his work with great propriety, and shewn his art and judgment. But the admiration due to so eminent a poet, must not prevent us from remarking some other particulars in which he has failed. First, there are scarcely any characters marked in the Æneid. In this respect, it is insipid, when compared to the Iliad, which is full of characters and life. Achates, and Cloanthus, and Gyas, and the rest of the Trojan heroes, who accompanied Æneas into Italy, are so many undistinguished figures, who are in no way made known to us, either by any sentiments which they utter, or any memorable exploits which they perform. Even Æneas himself is not a very interesting hero. He is described, indeed, as pious and brave; but his character is not marked with any of those strokes that touch the heart; it is a sort of cold and tame character; and throughout his behaviour to Dido, in the fourth book, especially in the speech which he makes after she suspected his intention of leaving her, there appears a certain hardness and want of relenting, which is far from rendering him amiable.* Dido's own character is by much the best supported, in the whole Æneid. The warmth of her passions, the keenness of her indignation and resentment, and the violence of her whole character, exhibit a figure greatly more animated than any other which Virgil has drawn.

Besides

* Num fletu ingemuit nostro? Num lumina flexit?
Num lachrymas victus dedit? Aut miseratus amantem est?
Æn. iv. 368.

Besides this defect of character in the Æneid, the distribution and management of the subject are, in some respects, exceptionable. The Æneid, it is true, must be considered with the indulgence due to a work not thoroughly completed. The six last books, are said not to have received the finishing hand of the author; and for this reason, he ordered, by his will, the Æneid to be committed to the flames. But though this may account for incorrectness of execution, it does not apologize for a falling off in the subject, which seems to take place in the latter part of the work. The wars with the Latins are inferior, in point of dignity, to the more interesting objects which had before been presented to us, in the destruction of Troy, the intrigue with Dido, and the descent into hell. And in those Italian wars, there is, perhaps, a more material fault still, in the conduct of the story. The reader, as Voltaire has observed, is tempted to take part with Turnus against Æneas. Turnus, a brave young prince, in love with Lavinia, his near relation, is destined for her by general consent, and highly favoured by her mother. Lavinia herself discovers no reluctance to the match: when there arrives a stranger, a fugitive from a distant region, who had never seen her, and who, founding a claim to an establishment in Italy upon oracles and prophecies, embroils the country in war, kills the lover of Lavinia, and proves the occasion of her mother's death. Such a plan is not fortunately laid, for disposing us to be favourable to the hero of the poem; and the defect might have been easily remedied, by the poet's making Æneas, instead of distressing Lavinia, deliver her from the persecution of some rival who was odious to her, and to the whole country.

But, notwithstanding those defects, which it was necessary to remark, Virgil possesses beauties which have justly drawn the admiration of ages, and which, to this day, hold the balance in equilibrium between his fame, and that of Homer. The principal and distinguishing excellency of Virgil, and which, in my opinion, he possesses beyond all poets, is tenderness. Nature had endowed him with exquisite sensibility; he felt every affecting circumstance in the scenes he describes; and, by a single stroke, he knows how to reach the heart. This, in an epic poem, is the merit next to sublimity; and puts it in an

authors

author's power to render his composition extremely interesting to all readers.

The chief beauty, of this kind, in the Iliad, is, the interview of Hector with Andromache. But, in the Æneid, there are many such. The second book is one of the greatest master-pieces that ever was executed by any hand; and Virgil seems to have put forth there the whole strength of his genius, as the subject afforded a variety of scenes, both of the awful and tender kind. The images of horror, presented by a city burned and sacked in the night, are finely mixed with pathetic and affecting incidents. Nothing, in any poet, is more beautifully described than the death of old Priam; and the family-pieces of Æneas, Anchises, and Creusa, are as tender as can be conceived. In many passages of the Æneid, the same pathetic spirit shines; and they have been always the favourite passages in that work. The fourth book, for instance, relating the unhappy passion and death of Dido, has been always most justly admired, and abounds with beauties of the highest kind. The interview of Æneas with Andromache and Helenus, in the third book; the episodes of Pallas and Evander, of Nisus and Euryalus, of Lausus and Mezentius, in the Italian wars, are all striking instances of the poet's power of raising the tender emotions. For we must observe, that though the Æneid be an unequal poem, and, in some places, languid, yet there are beauties scattered through it all; and not a few, even in the last six books. The best and most finished books, upon the whole, are the first, the second, the fourth, the sixth, the seventh, the eighth, and the twelfth.

Virgil's battles are far inferior to Homer's in point of fire and sublimity: but there is one important episode, the descent into hell, in which he has outdone Homer in the Odyssey, by many degrees. There is nothing in all antiquity equal, in its kind, to the sixth book of the Æneid. The scenery, and the objects are great and striking; and fill the mind with that solemn awe, which was to be expected from a view of the invisible world. There runs through the whole description, a certain philosophical sublime; which Virgil's Platonic genius, and the enlarged ideas of the Augustan age, enabled him to support with a degree of majesty, far beyond what the rude ideas of Homer's age suffered him to attain. With regard to the

the sweetness and beauty of Virgil's numbers, throughout his whole works, they are so well known, that it were needless to enlarge in the praise of them.

Upon the whole, as to the comparative merit of these two great princes of epic poetry, Homer and Virgil; the former must, undoubtedly, be admitted to be the greater genius; the latter, to be the more correct writer. Homer was an original in his art, and discovers both the beauties, and the defects, which are to be expected in an original author, compared with those who succeed him; more boldness, more nature and ease, more sublimity and force; but greater irregularities and negligences in composition. Virgil has, all along, kept his eye upon Homer; in many places, he has not so much imitated, as he has literally translated him. The description of the storm, for instance, in the first Æneid, and Æneas's speech upon that occasion, are translations from the fifth book of the Odyssey; not to mention almost all the similes of Virgil, which are no other than copies of those of Homer. The pre-eminence in invention, therefore, must, beyond doubt, be ascribed to Homer. As to the pre-eminence in judgment, though many critics incline to give it to Virgil, yet, in my opinion, it hangs doubtful. In Homer, we discern all the Greek vivacity; in Virgil, all the Roman stateliness. Homer's imagination is by much the most rich and copious; Virgil's the most chaste and correct. The strength of the former lies, in his power of warming the fancy; that of the latter, in his power of touching the heart. Homer's style is more simple and animated; Virgil's more elegant and uniform. The first has, on many occasions, a sublimity to which the latter never attains; but the latter, in return, never sinks below a certain degree of epic dignity, which cannot so clearly be pronounced of the former. Not, however, to detract from the admiration due to both these great poets, most of Homer's defects may reasonably be imputed, not to his genius, but to the manners of the age in which he lived; and for the feeble passages of the Æneid, this excuse ought to be admitted, that the Æneid was left an unfinished work.

LECTURE

LECTURE XLIV.

LUCAN's PHARSALIA. TASSO's JERUSALEM. CAMOENS's LUSIAD. FENELON's TELEMACHUS. VOLTAIRE's HENRIADE. MILTON's PARADISE LOST.

AFTER Homer and Virgil, the next great epic poet of ancient times, who presents himself, is Lucan. He is a poet who deserves our attention, on account of a very peculiar mixture of great beauties, with great faults. Though his Pharsalia discover too little invention, and be conducted in too historical a manner, to be accounted a perfectly regular epic poem, yet it were the mere squeamishness of criticism, to exclude it from the epic class. The boundaries, as I formerly remarked, are far from being ascertained by any such precise limit, that we must refuse the epic name to a poem, which treats of great and heroic adventures, because it is not exactly conformable to the plans of Homer and Virgil. The subject of the Pharsalia carries, undoubtedly, all the epic grandeur and dignity; neither does it want unity of object, viz. the triumph of Cæsar over the Roman liberty. As it stands at present, it is, indeed, brought to no proper close. But either time has deprived us of the last books, or it has been left by the author an incomplete work.

Though Lucan's subject be abundantly heroic, yet I cannot reckon him happy in the choice of it. It has two defects. The one is, that civil wars, especially when as fierce and cruel as those of the Romans, present too many shocking objects to be fit for epic poetry, and give odious and disgusting views of human nature. Gallant and honourable achievements, furnish a more proper theme for the epic muse. But Lucan's genius, it must be confessed, seems to delight in savage scenes; he dwells upon them too much; and not content with those

which

which his subject naturally furnished, he goes out of the way to introduce a long episode of Marius and Sylla's proscriptions, which abounds with all the forms of atrocious cruelty.

The other defect of Lucan's subject is its being too near the times in which he lived. This is a circumstance, as I observed in a former Lecture, always unlucky for a poet; as it deprives him of the assistance of fiction and machinery; and thereby renders his work less splendid and amusing. Lucan has submitted to this disadvantage of his subject; and in doing so, he has acted with more propriety, than if he had made an unseasonable attempt to embellish it with machinery; for the fables of the gods, would have made a very unnatural mixture with the exploits of Cæsar and Pompey; and instead of raising, would have diminished the dignity of such recent, and well-known facts.

With regard to characters, Lucan draws them with spirit, and with force. But, though Pompey be his professed hero, he does not succeed in interesting us much in his favour. Pompey is not made to possess any high distinction, either for magnanimity in sentiment, or bravery in action; but, on the contrary, is always eclipsed by the superior abilities of Cæsar. Cato, is in truth, Lucan's favourite character; and wherever he introduces him, he appears to rise above himself. Some of the noblest, and most conspicuous passages in the work, are such as relate to Cato; either speeches put into his mouth, or descriptions of his behaviour. His speech, in particular, to Labienus, who urged him to inquire at the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, concerning the issue of the war, [book ix. 564] deserves to be remarked, as equal, for moral sublimity, to any thing that is to be found in all antiquity.

In the conduct of the story, our author has attached himself too much to chronological order. This renders the thread of his narration broken and interrupted, and makes him hurry us too often from place to place. He is too digressive also; frequently turning aside from his subject, to give us, sometimes, geographical descriptions of a country; sometimes philosophical disquisitions concerning natural objects; as, concerning the African serpents in the ninth book, and the sources of the Nile in the tenth.

There

There are, in the Pharſalia, ſeveral very poetical and ſpirited deſcriptions. But the author's chief ſtrength does not lie, either in narration or deſcription. His narration is often dry and harſh; his deſcriptions are often over-wrought, and employed too upon diſagreeable objects. His principal merit conſiſts in his ſentiments, which are generally noble and ſtriking, and expreſſed in that glowing and ardent manner, which peculiarly diſtinguiſhes him. Lucan is the moſt philoſophical, and the moſt public-ſpirited poet, of all antiquity. He was the nephew of the famous Seneca, the philoſopher; was himſelf a ſtoic; and the ſpirit of that philoſophy breathes throughout his poem. We muſt obſerve too, that he is the only ancient epic poet whom the ſubject of his poem really and deeply intereſted. Lucan recounted no fiction. He was a Roman, and had felt all the direful effects of the Roman civil wars, and of that ſevere deſpotiſm, which ſucceeded the loſs of liberty. His high and bold ſpirit made him enter deeply into his ſubject, and kindle, on many occaſions, into the moſt real warmth. Hence, he abounds in exclamations and apoſtrophes, which are, almoſt always, well-timed, and ſupported with a vivacity and fire that do him no ſmall honour.

But it is the fate of this poet, that his beauties can never be mentioned without their ſuggeſting his blemiſhes alſo. As his principal excellency is a lively and glowing genius, which appears, ſometimes, in his deſcriptions, and very often in his ſentiments, his great defect in both is, want of moderation. He carries every thing to an extreme. He knows not where to ſtop. From an effort to aggrandiſe his objects, he becomes tumid and unnatural; and it frequently happens, that where the ſecond line of one of his deſcriptions is ſublime, the third, in which he meant to riſe ſtill higher, is perfectly bombaſt. Lucan lived in an age when the ſchools of the declaimers had begun to corrupt the eloquence and taſte of Rome. He was not free from the infection; and too often, inſtead of ſhowing the genius of the poet, betrays the ſpirit of the declaimer.

On the whole, however, he is an author of lively and original genius. His ſentiments are ſo high, and his fire, on occaſions, ſo great, as to atone for many of his defects; and paſſages can be produced from him, which are inferior to none in any

poet whatever. The characters, for instance, which he draws of Pompey and Cæsar in the first book, are masterly; and the comparison of Pompey to the aged decaying oak is highly poetical:

———————totus popularibus auris
Impelli, plausuque sui gaudere theatri;
Nec reparare novas vires, multumque priori
Credere fortunæ; stat magni nominis umbra.
Qualis, frugifero quercus sublimis in agro,
Exuvias veteres populi, sacrataque gestans
Dona ducum; nec jam validis radicibus hærens,
Pondere fixa suo est; nudosque per aëra ramos
Effundens, trunco, non frondibus, efficit umbram.
At quamvis primo nutet casura sub Euro,
Et circum silvæ firmo se robore tollant,
Sola tamen colitur. Sed non in Cæsare tantum
Nomen erat, nec fama ducis; sed nescia virtus
Stare loco; solusque pudor non vincere bello;
Acer et indomitus.——— L. I. 32.

But when we consider the whole execution of his poem, we are obliged to pronounce, that his poetical fire was not under the

With gifts and liberal bounty sought for fame,
And lov'd to hear the vulgar shout his name;
In his own theatre rejoic'd to sit,
Amidst the noisy praises of the pit.
Careless of future ills that might betide,
No aid he sought to prop his falling side,
But on his former fortune much rely'd.
Still seem'd he to possess, and fill his place;
But stood the shadow of what once he was.
So, in the field with Ceres' bounty spread,
Uprears some ancient oak his rev'rend head;
Chaplets and sacred gifts his boughs adorn,
And spoils of war by mighty heroes worn;
But the first vigour of his root now gone,
He stands dependant on his weight alone;
All bare his naked branches are display'd,
And with his leafless trunk he forms a shade:
Yet though the winds his ruin daily threat,
As every blast would heave him from his seat;
Though thousand fairer trees the field supplies,
That rich in youthful verdure round him rise,
Fix'd in his ancient seat, he yields to none,
And wears the honours of the grove alone.
But Cæsar's greatness, and his strength was more,
Than past renown and antiquated power;
'Twas not the fame of what he once had been,
Or tales in old records or annals seen;
But 'twas a valour, restless, unconfin'd,
Which no success could sate, nor limits bind;
'Twas shame, a soldier's shame, untaught to yield,
That blush'd for nothing but an ill-fought field. Rowe.

the government of either sound judgment or correct taste. His genius had strength, but not tenderness; nothing of what might be called amoenity, or sweetness. In his style, there is abundance of force; but a mixture of harshness, and frequently of obscurity, occasioned by his desire of expressing himself in a pointed and unusual manner. Compared with Virgil, he may be allowed to have more fire and higher sentiments, but in every thing else, falls infinitely below him, particularly in purity, elegance, and tenderness.

As Statius and Silius Italicus, though they be poets of the epic class, are too inconsiderable for particular criticism, I proceed next to Tasso, the most distinguished epic poet in modern ages.

His *Jerusalem Delivered*, was published in the year 1574. It is a poem regularly and strictly epic in its whole construction; and adorned with all the beauties that belong to that species of composition. The subject is, the Recovery of Jerusalem from the Infidels, by the united powers of Christendom; which, in itself, and more especially according to the ideas of Tasso's age, was a splendid, venerable, and heroic enterprise. The opposition of the Christians to the Saracens, forms an interesting contrast. The subject produces none of those fierce and shocking scenes of civil discord, which hurt the mind in Lucan, but exhibits the efforts of zeal and bravery, inspired by an honourable object. The share which religion possesses in the enterprize, both tends to render it more august, and opens a natural field for machinery and sublime description. The action too lies in a country, and at the period of time, sufficiently remote to allow an intermixture of fabulous tradition and fiction with true history.

In the conduct of the story, Tasso has shown a rich and fertile invention, which, in a poet, is a capital quality. He is full of events; and those too abundantly various, and diversified in their kind. He never allows us to be tired by mere war and fighting. He frequently shifts the scene; and, from camps and battles, transports us to more pleasing objects. Sometimes the solemnities of religion; sometimes the intrigues of love; at other times, the adventures of a journey, or even the incidents of pastoral life, relieve and entertain the reader. At the

same time, the whole work is artfully connected, and while there is much variety in the parts, there is perfect unity in the plan. The recovery of Jerusalem is the object kept in view through the whole, and with it the poem closes. All the episodes, if we except that of Olindo and Sophronia, in the second book, on which I formerly passed a censure, are sufficiently related to the main subject of the poem.

The poem is enlivened with a variety of characters, and those too both clearly marked and well supported. Godfrey, the leader of the enterprize, prudent, moderate, brave; Tancred, amorous, generous, and gallant, and well contrasted with the fierce and brutal Argantes; Rinaldo, (who is properly the hero of the poem, and is in part copied after Homer's Achilles) passionate and resentful, seduced by the allurements of Armida; but a personage, on the whole, of much zeal, honour, and heroism. The brave and high-minded Solyman, the tender Erminia, the artful and violent Armida, the masculine Clorinda—are all of them well drawn and animated figures. In the characteristical part, Tasso is indeed remarkably distinguished; he is, in this respect, superior to Virgil; and yields to no poet, except to Homer.

He abounds very much with machinery; and in this part of the work his merit is more dubious. Wherever celestial beings are made to interpose, his machinery is noble. God looking down upon the hosts, and, on different occasions, sending an Angel to check the Pagans, and to rebuke the evil spirits, produces a sublime effect. The description of hell too, with the appearance and speech of Satan, in the beginning of the 4th book, is extremely striking; and plainly has been imitated by Milton, though he must be allowed to have improved upon it. But the devils, the enchanters, and the conjurers, act too great a part throughout Tasso's poem; and from a sort of dark and gloomy machinery, not pleasing to the imagination. The enchanted wood, on which the nodus, or intrigue of the poem, is made in a great measure to depend; the messengers sent in quest of Rinaldo, in order that he may break the charm; their being conducted by a hermit to a cave in the centre of the earth; the wonderful voyage which they make to the fortunate islands; and their recovering Rinaldo from the charms of Armida

mida and voluptuousness; are scenes which, though very amusing, and described with the highest beauty of poetry, yet must be confessed to carry the marvellous to a degree of extravagance.

In general, that for which Tasso is most liable to censure, is a certain romantic vein, which runs through many of the adventures and incidents of his poem. The objects which he presents to us, are always great; but, sometimes, too remote from probability. He retains somewhat of the taste of his age, which was not reclaimed from an extravagant admiration of the stories of knight-errantry; stories, which the wild, but rich and agreeable imagination of Ariosto, had raised into fresh reputation. In apology, however, for Tasso, it may be said, that he is not more marvellous and romantic than either Homer, or Virgil. All the difference is, that in the one we find the romance of Paganism, in the other, that of chivalry.

With all the beauties of description, and of poetical style, Tasso remarkably abounds. Both his descriptions, and his style, are much diversified, and well suited to each other. In describing magnificent objects, his style is firm and majestic; when he descends to gay and pleasing ones, such as Erminia's pastoral retreat in the seventh book, and the arts and beauty of Armida in the fourth book, it is soft and insinuating. Both those descriptions, which I have mentioned, are exquisite in their kind. His battles are animated, and very properly varied in the incidents; inferior however to Homer's in point of spirit and fire.

In his sentiments, Tasso is not so happy as in his descriptions. It is indeed rather by actions, characters, and descriptions, that he interests us, than by the sentimental part of the work. He is far inferior to Virgil in tenderness. When he aims at being pathetic and sentimental in his speeches, he is apt to become artificial and strained.

With regard to points and conceits, with which he has often been reproached, the censure has been carried too far. Affectation is by no means the general character of Tasso's manner, which, upon the whole, is masculine, strong, and correct. On some occasions, indeed, especially, as I just now observed, when he seeks to be tender, he degenerates into forced and un-

natural

natural ideas; but these are far from being so frequent or common as has been supposed. Threescore or fourscore lines retrenched from the poem, would fully clear it, I am persuaded, of all such exceptionable passages.

With Boileau, Dacier, and the other French critics of the last age, the humour prevailed of decrying Tasso; and passed from them to some of the English writers. But one would be apt to imagine, they were not much acquainted with Tasso; or at least they must have read him under the influence of strong prejudices. For to me it appears clear, that the Jerusalem is, in rank and dignity, the third regular epic poem in the world; and comes next to the Iliad and Æneid. Tasso may be justly held inferior to Homer, in simplicity and in fire; to Virgil, in tenderness; to Milton, in daring sublimity of genius; but to no other he yields in any poetical talents; and for fertility of invention, variety of incidents, expression of characters, richness of description, and beauty of style, I know no poet, except the three just named, that can be compared to him.

Ariosto, the great rival of Tasso, in Italian poetry, cannot with any propriety, be classed among the epic writers. The fundamental rule of epic composition is, to recount a heroic enterprise, and to form it into a regular story. Though there is a sort of unity and connexion in the plan of Orlando Furioso, yet, instead of rendering this apparent to the reader, it seems to have been the author's intention to keep it out of view, by the desultory manner in which the poem is carried on, and the perpetual interruptions of the several stories before they are finished. Ariosto appears to have despised all regularity of plan, and to have chosen to give loose reins to a copious and rich, but extravagant fancy. At the same time, there is so much epic matter in the Orlando Furioso, that it would be improper to pass it by without some notice. It unites indeed all sorts of poetry; sometimes comic and satiric; sometimes light and licentious; at other times highly heroic, descriptive and tender. Whatever strain the poet assumes, he excels in it. He is always master of his subject; seems to play himself with it; and leaves us sometimes at a loss to know whether he be serious, or in jest. He is seldom dramatic; sometimes, but not often, sentimental; but in narration and description, perhaps no poet ever went beyond him. He makes every scene which

he describes, and every event which he relates, pass before our eyes; and in his selection of circumstances, is eminently picturesque. His style is much varied, always suited to the subject, and adorned with a remarkably smooth and melodious versification.

As the Italians make their boast of Tasso, so do the Portuguese of Camoens; who was nearly cotemporary with Tasso, but whose poem was published before the Jerusalem. The subject of it, is the first discovery of the East Indies by Vasco de Gama; an enterprise splendid in its nature, and extremely interesting to the countrymen of Camoens, as it laid the foundation of their future wealth and consideration in Europe. The poem opens with Vasco and his fleet appearing on the ocean, between the island of Madagascar, and the coast of Æthiopia. After various attempts to land on that coast, they are at last hospitably received in the kingdom of Melinda. Vasco, at the desire of the King, gives him an account of Europe, recites a poetical history of Portugal, and relates all the adventures of the voyage, which had preceded the opening of the poem. This recital takes up three cantos or books. It is well imagined; contains a great many poetical beauties; and has no defect, except that Vasco makes an unseasonable display of learning to the African Prince, in frequent allusions to the Greek and Roman histories. Vasco and his countrymen afterwards set forth to pursue their voyage. The storms and distresses which they encounter; their arrival at Calecut on the Malabar coast; their reception and adventures in that country, and at last their return homewards, fill up the rest of the poem.

The whole work is conducted according to the epic plan. Both the subject and the incidents are magnificent; and, joined with some wildness and irregularity, there appears in the execution much poetic spirit, strong fancy, and bold description; as far as I can judge from translations, without any knowledge of the original. There is no attempt towards painting characters in the poem; Vasco is the hero, and the only personage indeed that makes any figure.

The machinery of the Lusiad is perfectly extravagant; not only is it formed of a singular mixture of Christian ideas, and Pagan mythology; but it is so conducted, that the Pagan gods appear to be the true deities, and Christ and the Blessed Vir-

gin, to be ſubordinate agents. One great ſcope of the Portugueſe expedition, our author informs us, is to propagate the Chriſtian faith, and to extirpate Mahometaniſm. In this religious undertaking, the great protector of the Portugueſe is Venus, and their adverſary is Bacchus, whoſe diſpleaſure is excited, by Vaſco's attempting to rival his fame in the Indies. Councils of the gods are held, in which Jupiter is introduced as foretelling the downfall of Mahometaniſm, and the propagation of the goſpel. Vaſco, in great diſtreſs from a ſtorm, prays moſt ſeriouſly to God; implores the aid of Chriſt and the Virgin, and begs for ſuch aſſiſtance as was given to the Iſraelites, when they were paſſing through the Red Sea, and to the Apoſtle Paul, when he was in hazard of ſhipwreck. In return to this prayer, Venus appears, who diſcerning the ſtorm to be the work of Bacchus, complains to Jupiter, and procures the winds to be calmed. Such ſtrange and prepoſterous machinery, ſhows how much authors have been miſled by the abſurd opinion, that there could be no epic poetry without the gods of Homer. Towards the end of the work, indeed, the author gives us an awkward ſalvo for his whole mythology; making the goddeſs Thetis inform Vaſco, that ſhe, and the reſt of the heathen deities, are no more than names to deſcribe the operations of Providence.

There is, however, ſome fine machinery, of a different kind, in the Luſiad. The genius of the river Ganges appearing to Emanuel, King of portugal, in a dream, inviting that Prince to diſcover his ſecret ſprings, and acquainting him, that he was the deſtined monarch for whom the treaſures of the Eaſt were reſerved, is a happy idea. But the nobleſt conception of this ſort, is in the Fifth Canto, where Vaſco is recounting to the King of Melinda, all the wonders which he met with in his navigation. He tells him, that when the fleet arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, which never before had been doubled by any navigator, there appeared to them, on a ſudden, a huge and monſtrous phantom riſing out of the ſea, in the midſt of tempeſts and thunders, with a head that reached the clouds, and a countenance that filled them with terror. This was the genius, or guardian, of that hitherto unknown ocean. It ſpoke to them with a voice like thunder; menaced them, for invading thoſe ſeas which he had ſo long poſſeſſed undiſturbed; and

for

for daring to explore those secrets of the deep, which never had been revealed to the eye of mortals; required them to proceed no farther; if they should proceed, foretold all the successive calamities that were to befal them; and then, with a mighty noise, disappeared. This is one of the most solemn and striking pieces of machinery that ever was employed; and is sufficient to show that Camoens is a poet, though of an irregular, yet of a bold and lofty imagination.*

In reviewing the epic poets, it were unjust to make no mention of the amiable author of the Adventures of Telemachus. His work, though not composed in verse, is justly entitled to be held a poem. The measured poetical prose, in which it was written, is remarkably harmonious; and gives the style nearly as much elevation as the French language is capable of supporting, even in regular verse.

The plan of the work is, in general, well contrived; and is deficient neither in epic grandeur, nor unity of object. The author has entered with much felicity into the spirit and ideas of the ancient poets, particularly into the ancient mythology, which retains more dignity, and makes a better figure in his hands, than in those of any other modern poet. His descriptions are rich and beautiful; especially of the softer and calmer scenes, for which the genius of Fenelon was best suited; such as the incidents of pastoral life, the pleasures of virtue, or a country flourishing in peace. There is an inimitable sweetness and tenderness in several of the pictures of this kind, which he has given.

The best executed part of the work, is the first six books, in which Telemachus recounts his adventures to Calypso. The narration, throughout them, is lively and interesting. Afterwards, especially in the last twelve books, it becomes more tedious and languid; and in the warlike adventures which are attempted, there is a great defect of vigour. The chief objection against this work being classed with epic poems, arises from the minute detail of virtuous policy, into which the

* I have made no mention of the Araucana, an epic poem, in Spanish, composed by Alonzo d'Ercila, because I am unacquainted with the original language, and have not seen any translation of it. A full account of it is given by Mr. Hayley, in the notes upon his essay on epic poetry.

the author in some places enters; and from the discourses and instructions of Mentor, which recur upon us too often, and too much in the strain of common-place morality. Though these were well suited to the main design of the author, which was to form the mind of a young Prince, yet they seem not congruous to the nature of epic poetry; the object of which is to improve us by means of actions, characters, and sentiments, rather than by delivering professed and formal instruction.

Several of the epic poets have described a descent into hell; and in the prospects they have given us of the invisible world, we may observe the gradual refinement of men's notions, concerning a state of future rewards and punishments. The descent of Ulysses into Hell, in Homer's Odyssey, presents to us a very indistinct and dreary sort of object. The scene is laid in the country of the Cimmerians, which is always covered with clouds and darkness, at the extremity of the ocean. When the spirits of the dead begin to appear, we scarcely know whether Ulysses is above ground, or below it. None of the ghosts, even of the heroes, appears satisfied with their condition in the other world; and when Ulysses endeavours to comfort Achilles, by reminding him of the illustrious figure which he must make in those regions, Achilles roundly tells him, that all such speeches are idle; for he would rather be a day-labourer on earth, than have the command of all the dead.

In the sixth book of Æneid, we discern a much greater refinement of ideas, corresponding to the progress which the world had then made in philosophy. The objects there delineated, are both more clear and distinct, and more grand and awful. The separate mansions of good and of bad spirits, with the punishments of the one, and the employments and happiness of the other, are finely described; and in consistency with the most pure morality. But the visit which Fenelon makes Telemachus pay to the shades, is much more philosophical still than Virgil's. He employs the same fables and the same mythology; but we find the ancient mythology refined by the knowledge of the true religion, and adorned with that beautiful enthusiasm, for which Fenelon was so distinguished. His account of the happiness of the just is an excellent description in the mystic strain; and very expressive of the genius and spirit of the author.

Voltaire



Voltaire has given us in his Henriade, a regular epic poem, in French verse. In every performance of that celebrated writer, we may expect to find marks of genius; and, accordingly, that work discovers, in several places, that boldness in the conceptions, and that liveliness and felicity in the expression, for which the author is so remarkably distinguished. Several of the comparisons, in particular, which occur in it, are both new and happy. But, considered upon the whole, I cannot esteem it one of his chief productions; and am of opinion, that he has succeeded infinitely better in tragic, than in epic composition. French versification seems ill adapted to epic poetry. Besides it being always fettered by rhyme, the language never assumes a sufficient degree of elevation or majesty; and appears to be more capable of expressing the tender in tragedy, than of supporting the sublime in epic. Hence a feebleness, and sometimes a prosaic flatness, in the style of the Henriade; and whether from this, or from some other cause, the poem often languishes. It does not seize the imagination; nor interest and carry the reader along, with that ardour which ought to be inspired by a sublime and spirited epic poem.

The subject of the Henriade, is the triumph of Henry the Fourth over the arms of the League. The action of the poem, properly includes only the siege of Paris. It is an action perfectly epic in its nature; great, interesting, and conducted with a sufficient regard to unity and all the other critical rules. But it is liable to both the defects which I before remarked in Lucan's Pharsalia. It is founded wholly on civil wars; and presents to us those odious and detestable objects of massacres and assassinations, which throw a gloom over the poem. It is also, like Lucan's, of too recent a date, and comes too much within the bounds of well known history. To remedy this last defect, and to remove the appearance of being a mere historian, Voltaire has chosen to mix fiction with truth. The poem, for instance, opens with a voyage of Henry's to England, and an interview between him and Queen Elizabeth; though every one knows that Henry never was in England, and that these two illustrious personages never met. In facts of such public notoriety, a fiction like this shocks the reader, and forms an unnatural and ill-sorted mixture with historical truth. The episode

was

was contrived, in order to give Henry an opportunity of recounting the former transactions of the civil wars, in imitation of the recital which Æneas makes to Dido in the Æneid. But the imitation was injudicious. Æneas might, with propriety, relate to Dido, transactions of which she was either entirely ignorant, or had acquired only an imperfect knowledge by flying reports. But Queen Elizabeth could not but be supposed to be perfectly apprised of all the facts, which the poet makes Henry recite to her.

In order to embellish his subject, Voltaire has chosen to employ a great deal of machinery. But here also, I am obliged to censure his conduct; for the machinery which he chiefly employs, is of the worst kind, and the least suited to an epic poem, that of allegorical beings. Discord, cunning, and love, appear as personages, mix with the human actors, and make a considerable figure in the intrigue of the poem. This is contrary to every rule of rational criticism. Ghosts, angels, and devils have popular belief on their side, and may be conceived as existing. But every one knows, that allegorical beings are no more than representations of human dispositions and passions. They may be employed like other personifications and figures of speech; or in a poem, that is wholly allegorical, they may occupy the chief place. They are there in their native and proper region; but in a poem which relates to human transactions, as I had occasion before to remark, when such things are described as acting along with men, the imagination is confounded; it is divided between phantasms and realities, and knows not on what to rest.

In justice, however, to our author, I must observe, that the machinery of St. Louis, which he also employs, is of a better kind, and possesses real dignity. The finest passage in the Henriade, indeed one of the finest that occurs in any poem, is the prospect of the invisible world, which St. Louis gives to Henry in a dream, in the seventh canto. Death bringing the souls of the departed in succession before God; their astonishment when arriving from all different countries and religious sects, they are brought into the Divine Presence; when they find their superstitions to be false, and have the truth unveiled to them; the palace of the destinies opened to Henry, and the prospect of his successors which is there given him; are

striking

ſtriking and magnificent objects, and do honour to the genius of Voltaire.

Though ſome of the epiſodes in this poem are properly extended, yet the narration is, on the whole, too general; the events are too much crowded, and ſuperficially related; which is, doubtleſs, one cauſe of the poem making a faint impreſſion. The ſtrain of ſentiment which runs through it, is high and noble. Religion appears on every occaſion, with great and proper luſtre; and the author breathes that ſpirit of humanity and toleration, which is conſpicuous in all his works.

Milton, of whom it remains now to ſpeak, has chalked out for himſelf a new, and very extraordinary road, in poetry. As ſoon as we open his Paradiſe Loſt, we find ourſelves introduced all at once into an inviſible world, and ſurrounded with celeſtial and infernal beings. Angels and devils, are not the machinery, but principal actors in the poem; and what, in any other compoſition, would be the marvellous, is here only the natural courſe of events. A ſubject ſo remote from the affairs of this world, may furniſh ground to thoſe who think ſuch diſcuſſions material, to bring it into doubt, whether Paradiſe Loſt can properly be claſſed among epic poems. By whatever name it is to be called, it is, undoubtedly, one of the higheſt efforts of poetical genius; and in one great characteriſtic of the epic poem, majeſty and ſublimity, it is fully equal to any that bear that name.

How far the author was altogether happy in the choice of his ſubject, may be queſtioned. It has led him into very difficult ground. Had he taken a ſubject that was more human, and leſs theological; that was more connected with the occurrences of life, and afforded a greater diſplay of the characters and paſſions of men, his poem would, perhaps, have, to the bulk of readers, been more pleaſing and attractive. But the ſubject which he has choſen, ſuited the daring ſublimity of his genius.* It is a ſubject for which Milton alone was fitted; and

* "He ſeems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to "know what it was that nature had beſtowed upon him more bountifully than "upon others; the power of diſplaying the vaſt, illuminating the ſplendid, "enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful. "He therefore choſe a ſubject, on which too much could not be ſaid; on which "he might tire his fancy, without the cenſure of extravagance."

Dr. Johnson's Life of Milton.

and in the conduct of it, he has shewn a stretch both of imagination and invention, which is perfectly wonderful. It is astonishing how, from the few hints given us in the sacred scriptures, he was able to raise so complete and regular a structure; and to fill his poem with such a variety of incidents. Dry and harsh passages sometimes occur. The author appears, upon some occasions, a metaphysician and a divine, rather than a poet. But the general tenor of his work is interesting; he seizes and fixes the imagination; engages, elevates, and affects us as we proceed; which is always a sure test of merit in an epic composition. The artful change of his objects; the scene laid now in earth, now in hell, and now in heaven, affords a sufficient diversity; while unity of plan is, at the same time, perfectly supported. We have still life, and calm scenes, in the employments of Adam and Eve in Paradise; and we have busy scenes and great actions, in the enterprise of Satan, and the wars of the angels. The innocence, purity, and amiableness of our first parents, opposed to the pride and ambition of Satan, furnishes a happy contrast, that reigns throughout the whole poem; only the conclusion, as I before observed, is too tragic for epic poetry.

The nature of the subject did not admit any great display of characters; but such as could be introduced, are supported with much propriety. Satan, in particular, makes a striking figure, and is, indeed, the best drawn character in the poem. Milton has not described him, such as we suppose an infernal spirit to be. He has, more suitably to his own purpose, given him a human, that is, a mixed character, not altogether void of some good qualities. He is brave and faithful to his troops. In the midst of his impiety, he is not without remorse. He is even touched with pity for our first parents; and justifies himself in his design against them, from the necessity of his situation. He is actuated by ambition and resentment, rather than by pure malice. In short, Milton's Satan is no worse than many a conspirator or factious chief, that makes a figure in history. The different characters of Beelzebub, Moloch, Belial, are exceedingly well painted in those eloquent speeches which they make, in the second book. The good angels, though always described with dignity and propriety, have more uniformity

formity than the infernal spirits in their appearance; though among them, too, the dignity of Michael, the mild condescension of Raphael, and the tried fidelity of Abdiel, form proper characteristical distinctions. The attempt to describe God Almighty himself, and to recount dialogues between the Father and the Son, was too bold and arduous, and is that wherein our poet, as was to have been expected, has been most unsuccessful. With regard to his human characters; the innocence of our first parents, and their love, are finely and delicately painted. In some of his speeches to Raphael and to Eve, Adam is, perhaps, too knowing and refined for his situation. Eve is more distinctly characterised. Her gentleness, modesty and frailty, mark very expressively a female character.

Milton's great and distinguishing excellence, is, his sublimity. In this, perhaps, he excels Homer; as there is no doubt of his leaving Virgil, and every other poet, far behind him. Almost the whole of the first and second books of Paradise Lost, are continued instances of the highest sublime. The prospect of hell and of the fallen host, the appearance and behaviour of Satan, the consultation of the infernal chiefs, and Satan's flight through chaos to the borders of this world, discover the most lofty ideas that ever entered into the conception of any poet. In the sixth book also, there is much grandeur, particularly in the appearance of the Messiah; though some parts of that book are censurable; and the witticisms of the devils upon the effect of their artillery, form an intolerable blemish. Milton's sublimity is of a different kind from that of Homer. Homer's is generally accompanied with fire and impetuosity; Milton's possesses more of a calm and amazing grandeur. Homer warms and hurries us along; Milton fixes us in a state of astonishment and elevation. Homer's sublimity appears most in the description of actions; Milton's, in that of wonderful and stupendous objects.

But though Milton is most distinguished for his sublimity, yet there is also much of the beautiful, the tender, and the pleasing, in many parts of his work. When the scene is laid in Paradise, the imagery is always of the most gay and smiling kind. His descriptions show an uncommonly fertile imagination; and in his similes, he is, for the most part, remarkably happy. They are seldom improperly introduced; seldom either

low,

low, or trite. They generally present to us images taken from the sublime or the beautiful class of objects; if they have any faults, it is their alluding too frequently to matters of learning, and to fables of antiquity. In the latter part of Paradise Lost, there must be confessed to be a falling off. With the fall of our first parents, Milton's genius seems to decline. Beauties, however, there are, in the concluding books, of the tragic kind. The remorse and contrition of the guilty pair, and their lamentations over Paradise, when they are obliged to leave it, are very moving. The last episode of the angel's showing Adam the fate of his posterity, is happily imagined; but, in many places, the execution is languid.

Milton's language and versification have high merit. His style is full of majesty, and wonderfully adapted to his subject. His blank verse is harmonious and diversified, and affords the most complete example of the elevation, which our language is capable of attaining by the force of numbers. It does not flow like the French verse, in tame, regular, uniform melody, which soon tires the ear; but is sometimes smooth and flowing, sometimes rough; varied in its cadence, and intermixed with discords, so as to suit the strength and freedom of epic composition. Neglected and prosaic lines, indeed, we sometimes meet with; but, in a work so long, and in the main so harmonious, these may be forgiven.

On the whole; Paradise Lost is a poem that abounds with beauties of every kind, and that justly entitles its author to a degree of fame not inferior to any poet; though it must also be admitted to have many inequalities. It is the lot of almost every high and daring genius, not to be uniform and correct. Milton is too frequently theological and metaphysical; sometimes harsh in his language; often too technical in his words, and affectedly ostentatious of his learning. Many of his faults must be attributed to the pedantry of the age in which he lived. He discovers a vigour, a grasp of genius equal to every thing that is great; sometimes he rises above every poet; at other times he falls much below himself.

LECTURE

LECTURE XLV.

DRAMATIC POETRY. TRAGEDY.

DRAMATIC poetry has, among all civilized nations, been confidered as a rational and ufeful entertainment, and judged worthy of careful and ferious difcuffion. According as it is employed upon the light and the gay, or upon the grave and affecting incidents of human life, it divides itfelf into the two forms, of comedy or tragedy. But as great and ferious objects command more attention than little and ludicrous ones; as the fall of a hero interefts the public more than the marriage of a private perfon; tragedy has been always held a more dignified entertainment than comedy. The one refts upon the high paffions, the virtues, crimes, and fufferings of mankind. The other on their humours, follies, and pleafures. Terror and pity are the great inftruments of the former; ridicule is the fole inftrument of the latter. Tragedy fhall therefore be the object of our fulleft difcuffion. This and the following Lecture fhall be employed on it; after which I fhall treat of what is peculiar to comedy.

Tragedy, confidered as an exhibition of the characters and behaviour of men, in fome of the moft trying and critical fituations of life, is a noble idea of poetry. It is a direct imitation of human manners and actions. For it does not, like the epic poem, exhibit characters by the narration and defcription of the poet; but the poet difappears; and the perfonages themfelves are fet before us, acting and fpeaking what is fuitable to their characters. Hence, no kind of writing is fo great a trial of the author's profound knowledge of the human heart. No kind of writing has fo much power, when happily executed, to raife the ftrongeft emotions. It is, or ought to be, a mirror in which we behold ourfelves, and the evils to which we are expofed;

posed; a faithful copy of the human passions, with all their direful effects, when they are suffered to become extravagant.

As tragedy is a high and distinguished species of composition, so also, in its general strain and spirit, it is favourable to virtue. Such power hath virtue happily over the human mind, by the wise and gracious constitution of our nature, that as admiration cannot be raised in epic poetry, so neither in tragic poetry can our passions be strongly moved, unless virtuous emotions be awakened within us. Every poet finds, that it is impossible to interest us in any character, without representing that character as worthy and honourable, though it may not be perfect; and that the great secret for raising indignation, is to paint the person who is to be the object of it, in the colours of vice and depravity. He may, indeed, nay, he must, represent the virtuous as sometimes unfortunate, because this is often the case in real life; but he will always study to engage our hearts in their behalf; and though they may be described as unprosperous, yet there is no instance of a tragic poet representing vice as fully triumphant, and happy, in the catastrophe of the piece. Even when bad men succeed in their designs, punishment is made always to attend them; and misery of one kind or other, is shown to be unavoidably connected with guilt. Love and admiration of virtuous characters, compassion for the injured and the distressed, and indignation against the authors of their sufferings, are the sentiments most generally excited by tragedy. And, therefore, though dramatic writers may sometimes, like other writers, be guilty of improprieties, though they may fail of placing virtue precisely in the due point of light, yet no reasonable person can refuse tragedy to be a moral species of composition. Taking tragedies complexly, I am fully persuaded, that the impressions left by them upon the mind are, on the whole, favourable to virtue and good dispositions. And, therefore, the zeal which some pious men have shewn against the entertainments of the theatre, must rest only upon the abuse of comedy; which, indeed, has frequently been so great as to justify very severe censures against it.

The account which Aristotle gives of the design of tragedy, is, that it is intended to purge our passions by means of pity and terror. This is somewhat obscure. Various senses have

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been put upon his words, and much altercation has followed among his commentators. Without entering into any controversy upon this head, the intention of tragedy may, I think, be more shortly and clearly defined, To improve our virtuous sensibility. If an author interests us in behalf of virtue, forms us to compassion for the distressed, inspires us with proper sentiments, on beholding the vicissitudes of life, and, by means of the concern which he raises for the misfortunes of others, leads us to guard against errors in our own conduct, he accomplishes all the moral purposes of tragedy.

In order to this end, the first requisite is, that he pitch upon some moving and interesting story, and that he conduct it in a natural and probable manner. For we must observe, that the natural and the probable must always be the basis of tragedy; and are infinitely more essential there, than in epic poetry. The object of the epic poet, is to excite our admiration by the recital of heroic adventures; and a much slighter degree of probability is required when admiration is concerned, than when the tender passions are intended to be moved. The imagination, in the former case is exalted, accommodates itself to the poet's idea, and can admit the marvellous, without being shocked. But tragedy demands a stricter imitation of the life and actions of men. For the end which it pursues is, not so much to elevate the imagination, as to affect the heart; and the heart always judges more nicely than the imagination, of what is probable. Passion can be raised, only by making the impressions of nature, and of truth, upon the mind. By introducing, therefore, any wild or romantic circumstances into his story, the poet never fails to check passion in its growth, and of course, disappoints the main effect of tragedy.

This principle, which is founded on the clearest reason, excludes from tragedy all machinery, or fabulous intervention of the gods. Ghosts have, indeed, maintained their place; as being strongly founded on popular belief, and peculiarly suited to heighten the terror of tragic scenes. But all unravellings of the plot, which turn upon the interposition of deities, such as Euripides employs in several of his plays, are much to be condemned; both as clumsy and inartificial, and as destroying the probability of the story. This mixture of machinery, with the tragic action, is undoubtedly a blemish in the ancient theatre.

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In order to promote that impression of probability which is so necessary to the success of tragedy, some critics have required, that the subject should never be a pure fiction invented by the poet, but built on real history or known facts. Such, indeed, were generally, if not always, the subjects of the Greek tragedians. But I cannot hold this to be a matter of any great consequence. It is proved by experience, that a fictitious tale, if properly conducted, will melt the heart as much as any real history. In order to our being moved, it is unnecessary, that the events related did actually happen, provided they be such, as might easily have happened in the ordinary course of nature. Even when tragedy borrows its materials from history, it mixes many a fictitious circumstance. The greatest part of readers neither know, nor inquire, what is fabulous or what is historical, in the subject. They attend only to what is probable, and are touched by events which resemble nature. Accordingly, some of the most pathetic tragedies are entirely fictitious in the subject; such as Voltaire's Zaire and Alzire, the Orphan, Douglas, the Fair Penitent, and several others.

Whether the subject be of the real or feigned kind, that on which most depends for rendering the incidents in a tragedy probable, and by means of their probability affecting, is the conduct, or management of the story, and the connexion of its several parts. To regulate this conduct, critics have laid down the famous rule of the three unities, the importance of which, it will be necessary to discuss. But, in order to do this with more advantage, it will be necessary, that we first look backwards, and trace the rise and origin of tragedy, which will give light to several things relating to the subject.

Tragedy, like other arts, was in its beginnings, rude and imperfect. Among the Greeks, from whom our dramatic entertainments are derived, the origin of tragedy was no other than the song which was wont to be sung at the festival of Bacchus. A goat was the sacrifice offered to that god; after the sacrifice, the priests, with the company that joined them, sung hymns in honour of Bacchus; and from the name of the victim, τραγος, a goat joined with ῳδη, a song, undoubtedly arose the word, tragedy.

These hymns, or lyric poems, were sung sometimes by the whole company, sometimes by separate bands, answering alter-

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nately to each other; making what we call a chorus, with its ſtrophes and antiſtrophes. In order to throw ſome variety into this entertainment, and to relieve the ſingers, it was thought proper to introduce a perſon who, between the ſongs, ſhould make a recitation in verſe. Theſpis, who lived about 536 years before the Chriſtian æra, made this innovation; and as it was reliſhed, Æſchylus, who came 50 years after him, and who is properly the father of tragedy, went a ſtep farther, introduced a dialogue between two perſons, or actors, in which he contrived to interweave ſome intereſting ſtory, and brought his actors on a ſtage, adorned with proper ſcenery and decorations. All that theſe actors recited, was called epiſode, or additional ſong; and the ſongs of the chorus were made to relate no longer to Bacchus, their original ſubject, but to the ſtory in which the actors were concerned. This began to give the drama a regular form, which was ſoon after brought to perfection, by Sophocles and Euripides. It is remarkable in how ſhort a ſpace of time tragedy grew up among the Greeks, from the rudeſt beginnings to its moſt perfect ſtate. For Sophocles, the greateſt and moſt correct of all the tragic poets, flouriſhed only 22 years after Æſchylus, and was little more than 70 years poſterior to Theſpis.

From the account which I have now given, it appears, that the chorus was the baſis or foundation of the ancient tragedy. It was not an ornament added to it; or a contrivance deſigned to render it more perfect; but, in truth, the dramatic dialogue was an addition to the chorus, which was the original entertainment. In proceſs of time, the chorus, from being the principal, became only the acceſſary in tragedy; till at laſt, in modern tragedy, it has diſappeared altogether; which forms the chief diſtinction between the ancient and the modern ſtage.

This has given riſe to a queſtion, much agitated between the partizans of the ancients and the moderns, whether the drama has gained, or has ſuffered, by the abolition of the chorus. It muſt be admitted, that the chorus tended to render tragedy both more magnificent, and more inſtructive and moral. It was always the moſt ſublime and poetical part of the work; and being carried on by ſinging, and accompanied with muſic, it muſt, no doubt, have diverſified the entertainment greatly, and added to its ſplendour. The chorus, at

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the ſame time, conveyed conſtant leſſons of virtue. It was compoſed of ſuch perſons as might moſt naturally be ſuppoſed preſent on the occaſion; inhabitants of the place where the ſcene was laid, often the companions of ſome of the principal actors, and, therefore, in ſome degree intereſted in the iſſue of the action. This company, which, in the days of Sophocles, was reſtricted to the number of fifteen perſons, was conſtantly on the ſtage, during the whole performance, mingled in diſcourſe with the actors, entered into their concerns, ſuggeſted counſel and advice to them, moraliſed on all the incidents that were going on, and, during the intervals of the action, ſung their odes, or ſongs, in which they addreſſed the gods, prayed for ſucceſs to the virtuous, lamented their misfortunes, and delivered many religious and moral ſentiments.*

But, notwithſtanding, the advantages which were obtained by means of the chorus, the inconveniences on the other ſide are ſo great, as to render the modern practice of excluding the chorus, far more eligible upon the whole. For if a natural, and probable imitation of human actions be the chief end of the drama, no other perſons ought to be brought on the ſtage, than thoſe who are neceſſary to the dramatic action. The introduction of an adventitious company of perſons, who have but a ſlight concern in the buſineſs of the play, is unnatural in itſelf,

* The office of the chorus is thus deſcribed by Horace:

Actoris partes chorus, officiumque virile
Defendat; neu quid medios intercinat actus,
Quod non propoſito conducat, et hæreat aptè.
Ille bonis faveatque, et concilietur amicis,
Et regat iratos, et amet peccare timentes:
Ille dapes laudet menſæ brevis; ille ſalubrem
Juſtitiam, legeſque, & apertis otia portis.
Ille tegat commiſſa; deoſque precetur, et oret
Ut redeat miſeris, abeat fortuna ſuperbis. De Art. Poet. 193.

The chorus muſt ſupport an actor's part,
Defend the virtuous and adviſe with art;
Govern the choleric, and the proud appeaſe,
And the ſhort feaſts of frugal tables praiſe;
Applaud the juſtice of well govern'd ſtates;
And peace triumphant with her open gates.
Entruſted ſecrets let them ne'er betray,
But to the righteous gods with ardour pray,
That fortune, with returning ſmiles, may bleſs
Afflicted worth, and impious pride depreſs;
Yet let their ſongs with apt coherence join,
Promote the plot, and aid the juſt deſign. Francis.

itself, embarrassing to the poet, and, though it may render the spectacle splendid, tends, undoubtedly, to render it more cold and uninteresting, because more unlike a real transaction. The mixture of music, or song, on the part of the chorus, with the dialogue carried on by the actors, is another unnatural circumstance, removing the representation still farther from the resemblance of life. The poet, besides, is subjected to innumerable difficulties, in so contriving his plan, that the presence of the chorus, during all the incidents of the play, shall consist with any probability. The scene must be constantly, and often absurdly, laid in some public place, that the chorus may be supposed to have free access to it. To many things that ought to be transacted in private, the chorus must ever be witnesses; they must be the confederates of both parties, who come successively upon the stage, and who are, perhaps, conspiring against each other. In short, the management of a chorus is an unnatural confinement to a poet; it requires too great a sacrifice of probability in the conduct of the action; it has too much the air of a theatrical decoration, to be consistent with that appearance of reality, which a poet must ever preserve, in order to move our passions. The origin of tragedy, among the Greeks, we have seen, was a choral song, or hymn, to the gods. There is no wonder, therefore, that on the Greek stage it so long maintained possession. But it may confidently, I think, be asserted, that if, instead of the dramatic dialogue having been superadded to the chorus, the dialogue itself had been the first invention, the chorus would, in that case, never have been thought of.

One use, I am of opinion, might still be made of the ancient chorus, and would be a considerable improvement of the modern theatre; if instead of that unmeaning, and often improperly chosen music, with which the audience is entertained in the intervals between the acts, a chorus were then to be introduced, whose music and songs, though forming no part of the play, should have a relation to the incidents of the preceding act, and to the dispositions which those incidents are presumed to have awakened in the spectators. By this means, the tone of passion would be kept up without interruption; and all the good effects of the ancient chorus might be preserved, for in-

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ſpiring proper ſentiments, and for increaſing the morality of the performance, without thoſe inconveniences which aroſe from the chorus forming a conſtituent part of the play, and mingling unſeaſonably, and unnaturally, with the perſonages of the drama.

After the view which we have taken of the riſe of tragedy, and of the nature of the ancient chorus, with the advantages and inconveniences attending it, our way is cleared for examining, with more advantage, the three unities of action, place, and time, which have generally been conſidered as eſſential to the proper conduct of the dramatic fable.

Of theſe three, the firſt, unity of action, is, beyond doubt, far the moſt important. In treating of epic poetry, I have already explained the nature of it; as conſiſting in a relation which all the incidents introduced bear to ſome deſign or effect, ſo as to combine naturally into one whole. This unity of ſubject is ſtill more eſſential to tragedy, than it is to epic poetry. For a multiplicity of plots, or actions, crowded into ſo ſhort a ſpace as tragedy allows, muſt, of neceſſity, diſtract the attention, and prevent paſſion from riſing to any height. Nothing therefore, is worſe conduct in a tragic poet, than to carry on two independent actions in the ſame play; the effect of which, is, that the mind being ſuſpended and divided between them, cannot give itſelf up entirely either to the one, or the other. There may, indeed, be under-plots; that is, the perſons introduced, may have different purſuits and deſigns; but the poet's art muſt be ſhewn in managing theſe ſo as to render them ſubſervient to the main action. They ought to be connected with the cataſtrophe of the play, and to conſpire in bringing it forward. If there be any intrigue which ſtands ſeparate and independent, and which may be left out without affecting the unravelling of the plot, we may always conclude this to be a faulty violation of unity. Such epiſodes are not permitted here, as in epic poetry.

We have a clear example of this defect in Mr. Addiſon's Cato. The ſubject of this tragedy is the death of Cato; and a very noble perſonage Cato is, and ſupported by the author with much dignity. But all the love ſcenes in the play, the paſſion of Cato's two ſons for Lucia, and that of Juba for Cato's daughter,

daughter, are mere episodes; have no connexion with the principal action, and no effect upon it. The author thought his subject too barren in incidents, and in order to diversify it, he has given us, as it were, by the by, a history of the amours that were going on in Cato's family; by which he hath both broken the unity of his subject, and formed a very unseasonable junction of gallantry, with the high sentiments, and public spirited passions which predominate in other parts, and which the play was chiefly designed to display.

We must take care not to confound the unity of the action with the simplicity of the plot. Unity and simplicity, import different things in dramatic composition. The plot is said to be simple, when a small number of incidents are introduced into it. But it may be implex, as the critics term it, that is, it may include a considerable number of persons and events, and yet not be deficient in unity; provided all the incidents be made to tend towards the principal object of the play, and be properly connected with it. All the Greek tragedies not only maintain unity in the action, but are remarkably simple in the plot; to such a degree, indeed, as sometimes to appear to us too naked, and destitute of interesting events. In the Œdipus Coloneus, for instance, of Sophocles, the whole subject is no more than this: Œdipus, blind and miserable, wanders to Athens, and wishes to die there; Creon, and his son Polynices, arrive at the same time, and endeavour, separately, to persuade the old man to return to Thebes, each with a view to his own interest; he will not go; Theseus, the king of Athens, protects him; and the play ends with his death. In the Philoctetes of the same author, the plot, or fable, is nothing more than Ulysses, and the son of Achilles, studying to persuade the diseased Philoctetes to leave his uninhabited island, and go with them to Troy; which he refuses to do, till Hercules, whose arrows he possessed, descends from heaven and commands him. Yet these simple, and seemingly barren subjects, are wrought up with so much art by Sophocles, as to become very tender and affecting.

Among the moderns, much greater variety of events has been admitted into tragedy. It has become more the theatre of passion than it was among the ancients. A greater display

of characters is attempted; more intrigue and action are carried on; our curiosity is more awakened, and more interesting situations arise. This variety is, upon the whole, an improvement on tragedy; it renders the entertainment both more animated, and more instructive; and when kept within due bounds, may be perfectly consistent with unity of subject. But the poet must, at the same time, beware of not deviating too far from simplicity, in the construction of his fable. For if he overcharges it with action and intrigue, it becomes perplexed and embarrassed; and, by consequence, loses much of its effect. Congreve's "Mourning Bride," a tragedy, otherwise far from being void of merit, fails in this respect; and may be given as an instance of one standing in perfect opposition to the simplicity of the ancient plots. The incidents succeed one another too rapidly. The play is too full of business. It is difficult for the mind to follow and comprehend the whole series of events; and, what is the greatest fault of all, the catastrophe, which ought always to be plain and simple, is brought about in a manner too artificial and intricate.

Unity of action must not only be studied in the general construction of the fable or plot, but must regulate the several acts and scenes, into which the play is divided.

The division of every play, into five acts, has no other foundation than common practice, and the authority of Horace:

> Neve minor, neu sit quinto productior actu
> Fabula.——— De Arte Poet.*

It is a division purely arbitrary. There is nothing in the nature of the composition which fixes this number rather than any other; and it had been much better if no such number had been ascertained, but every play had been allowed to divide itself into as many parts, or intervals, as the subject naturally pointed out. On the Greek stage, whatever may have been the case on the Roman, the division by acts was totally unknown. The word, act, never once occurs in Aristotle's Poetics, in which he defines exactly every part of the drama, and divides

* If you would have your play deserve success,
Give it five acts complete, nor more, nor less. Francis.

divides it into the beginning, the middle, and the end; or, in his own words, into the prologue, the episode, and the exode. The Greek tragedy was, indeed, one continued representation, from beginning to end. The stage was never empty, nor the curtain let fall. But, at certain intervals, when the actors retired, the chorus continued and sung. Neither do these songs of the chorus divide the Greek tragedies into five portions, similar to our acts; though some of the commentators have endeavoured to force them into this office. But it is plain, that the intervals at which the chorus sung, are extremely unequal and irregular, suited to the occasion and the subject; and would divide the play sometimes into three, sometimes into seven or eight acts.*

As practice has now established a different plan on the modern stage, has divided every play into five acts, and made a total pause in the representation at the end of each act, the poet must be careful that this pause shall fall in a proper place; where there is a natural pause in the action; and where, if the imagination has any thing to supply, that is not represented on the stage, it may be supposed to have been transacted during the interval.

The first act ought to contain a clear exposition of the subject. It ought to be so managed as to awaken the curiosity of the spectators; and, at the same time, to furnish them with materials for understanding the sequel. It should make them acquainted with the personages who are to appear, with their several views and interests, and with the situation of affairs at the time when the play commences. A striking introduction, such as the first speech of Almeria, in the Mourning Bride, and that of Lady Randolph, in Douglas, produces a happy effect; but this is what the subject will not always admit. In the ruder times of dramatic writing, the exposition of the subject was wont to be made by a prologue, or by a single actor appearing, and giving full and direct information to the spectators. Some of Æschylus's and Euripides's plays are opened in this manner. But such an introduction is extremely inartificial, and therefore, is now totally abolished, and the subject made to open itself by conversation, among the first actors who are brought upon the stage.

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* See the Dissertation prefixed to Franklin's Translation of Sophocles.

During the course of the drama, in the second, third, and fourth acts, the plot should gradually thicken. The great object which the poet ought here to have in view, is, by interesting us in his story, to keep our passions always awake. As soon as he allows us to languish, there is no more tragic merit. He should, therefore, introduce no personages but such as are necessary for carrying on the action. He should contrive to place those, whom he finds it proper to introduce, in the most interesting situations. He should have no scenes of idle conversation, or mere declamation. The action of the play ought to be always advancing; and as it advances, the suspense, and the concern of the spectators, to be raised more and more. This is the great excellency of Shakespeare, that his scenes are full of sentiment and action, never of mere discourse; whereas, it is often a fault of the best French tragedians, that they allow the action to languish, for the sake of a long and artful dialogue. Sentiment, passion, pity, and terror, should reign throughout a tragedy. Every thing should be full of movements. An useless incident, or an unnecessary conversation, weaken the interest which we take in the action, and render us cold and inattentive.

The fifth act is, the seat of the catastrophe, or the unravelling of the plot, in which we always expect the art and genius of the poet to be most fully displayed. The first rule concerning it, is, that it be brought about by probable and natural means. Hence all unravellings which turn upon disguised habits, rencounters by night, mistakes of one person for another, and other such theatrical and romantic circumstances, are to be condemned as faulty. In the next place, the catastrophe ought always to be simple; to depend on few events, and to include but few persons. Passion never rises so high when it is divided among many objects, as when it is directed towards one, or a few. And it is still more checked, if the incidents be so complex and intricate, that the understanding is put on the stretch to trace them, when the heart should be wholly delivered up to emotion. The catastrophe of the Mourning Bride, as I formerly hinted, offends against both these rules. In the last place, the catastrophe of a tragedy ought to be the reign of pure sentiment and passion. In proportion as it approaches, every thing should warm and glow.

glow. No long discourses; no cold reasonings; no parade of genius, in the midst of those solemn and awful events, that close some of the great revolutions of human fortune. There, if any where, the poet must be simple, serious, pathetic; and speak no language but that of nature.

The ancients were fond of unravellings, which turned upon what is called, an "Anagnorisis," or, a discovery of some person to be different from what he was taken to be. When such discoveries are artfully conducted, and produced in critical situations, they are extremely striking; such as that famous one in Sophocles, which makes the whole subject of his Œdipus Tyrannus, and which is, undoubtedly, the fullest of suspense, agitation, and terror, that ever was exhibited on any stage. Among the moderns, two of the most distinguished Anagnorises, are those contained in Voltaire's Merope, and Mr. Home's Douglas: both of which, are great master-pieces of the kind.

It is not essential to the catastrophe of a tragedy, that it should end unhappily. In the course of the play, there may be sufficient agitation and distress, and many tender emotions raised by the sufferings and dangers of the virtuous, though, in the end, good men are rendered successful. The tragic spirit, therefore, does not want scope upon this system; and, accordingly, the Athalie of Racine, and some of Voltaire's finest plays, such as Alzire, Merope, and the Orphan of China, with some few English tragedies likewise, have a fortunate conclusion. But, in general, the spirit of tragedy, especially of English tragedy, leans more to the side of leaving the impression of virtuous sorrow full and strong upon the heart.

A question intimately connected with this subject, and which has employed the speculations of several philosophical critics, naturally occurs here; How it comes to pass that those emotions of sorrow which tragedy excites, afford any gratification to the mind? For, is not sorrow, in its nature, a painful passion? Is not real distress often occasioned to the spectators, by the dramatic representations at which they assist? Do we not see their tears flow? and yet, while the impression of what they have suffered remains upon their minds, they assemble in crowds, to renew the same distresses. The question is not without difficulty, and various solutions of it have been proposed by inge-

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vious men.* The most plain and satisfactory account of the matter, appears to me to be the following. By the wise and gracious constitution of our nature, the exercise of all the social passions is attended with pleasure. Nothing is more pleasing and grateful, than love and friendship. Wherever man takes a strong interest in the concerns of his fellow-creatures, an internal satisfaction is made to accompany the feeling. Pity, or compassion, in particular, is, for wise ends, appointed to be one of the strongest instincts of our frame, and is attended with a peculiar attractive power. It is an affection which cannot but be productive of some distress, on account of the sympathy with the sufferers, which it necessarily involves. But, as it includes benevolence and friendship, it partakes, at the same time, of the agreeable and pleasing nature of those affections. The heart is warmed by kindness and humanity, at the same moment at which it is afflicted by the distresses of those with whom it sympathises: and the pleasure arising from these kind emotions, prevails so much in the mixture, and so far counterbalances the pain, as to render the state of the mind, upon the whole, agreeable. At the same time, the immediate pleasure, which always goes along with the operation of the benevolent and sympathetic affections, derives an addition from the approbation of our own minds. We are pleased with ourselves, for feeling as we ought, and for entering, with proper sorrow, into the concerns of the afflicted. In tragedies, besides, other adventitious circumstances concur to diminish the painful part of sympathy, and to increase the satisfaction attending it. We are, in some measure, relieved, by thinking that the cause of our distress is feigned, not real; and we are also gratified by the charms of poetry, the propriety of sentiment and language, and the beauty of action. From the concurrence of these causes, the pleasure which we receive from tragedy, notwithstanding the distress it occasions, seems to me to be accounted for, in a satisfactory manner. At the same time, it is to be observed, that, as there is always a mixture of pain in the pleasure,

* See Dr. Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, Book I. ch. xi. where an account is given of the hypotheses of different critics on this subject; and where one is proposed, with which, in the main, I agree.—See also Lord Kaimes's Essays on the Principles of Morality, Essay I. And Mr. David Hume's Essay on Tragedy.

pleaſure, that pain is capable of being ſo much heightened by the repreſentation of incidents extremely direful, as to ſhock our feelings, and to render us averſe, either to the reading of ſuch tragedies, or to the beholding of them upon the ſtage.

Having now ſpoken of the conduct of the ſubject throughout the acts, it is alſo neceſſary to take notice of the conduct of the ſeveral ſcenes which make up the acts of a play.

The entrance of a new perſonage upon the ſtage, forms what is called a new ſcene. Theſe ſcenes, or ſucceſſive converſations, ſhould be cloſely linked and connected with each other; and much of the art of dramatic compoſition is ſhown in maintaining this connexion. Two rules are neceſſary to be obſerved for this purpoſe.

The firſt is, that, during the courſe of one act, the ſtage ſhould never be left vacant, though but for a ſingle moment; that is, all the perſons who have appeared in one ſcene, or converſation, ſhould never go off together, and be ſucceeded by a new ſet of perſons appearing in the next ſcene, independent of the former. This makes a gap, or total interruption in the repreſentation, which, in effect, puts an end to that act. For, wherever the ſtage is evacuated, the act is cloſed. This rule is, very generally, obſerved by the French tragedians; but the Engliſh writers, both of comedy and tragedy, ſeldom pay any regard to it. Their perſonages ſucceed one another upon the ſtage with ſo little connexion; the union of their ſcenes is ſo much broken, that, with equal propriety, their plays might be divided into ten or twelve acts, as into five.

The ſecond rule which the Engliſh writers alſo obſerve little better than the former, is, that no perſon ſhould come upon the ſtage, or leave it, without a reaſon appearing to us, both for the one and the other. Nothing is more awkward, and contrary to art, than for an actor to enter, without our ſeeing any cauſe for his appearing in that ſcene, except that it was for the poet's purpoſe he ſhould enter preciſely at ſuch a moment; or for an actor to go away, without any reaſon for his retiring, farther than that the poet had no more ſpeeches to put into his mouth. This is managing the perſonæ dramatis exactly like ſo many puppets, who are moved by wires, to anſwer the call of the maſter of the ſhow. Whereas the perfection

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tion of dramatic writing requires that every thing should be conducted in imitation, as near as possible, of some real transaction; where we are let into the secret of all that is passing; where we behold persons before us always busy; see them coming and going; and know perfectly whence they come, and whither they go, and about what they are employed.

All that I have hitherto said, relates to the unity of the dramatic action. In order to render the unity of action more complete, critics have added the other two unities of time and place. The strict observance of these is more difficult, and perhaps, not so necessary. The unity of place requires that the scene should never be shifted; but that the action, of the play should be continued to the end, in the same place where it is supposed to begin. The unity of time, strictly taken, requires, that the time of the action be no longer than the time that is allowed for the representation of the play; though Aristotle seems to have given the poet a little more liberty, and permitted the action to comprehend the whole time of one day.

The intention of both these rules is, to overcharge as little as possible, the imagination of the spectators with improbable circumstances in the acting of the play, and to bring the imitation more close to reality. We must observe, that the nature of dramatic exhibitions upon the Greek stage, subjected the ancient tragedians to a more strict observance of those unities than is necessary in modern theatres. I showed, that a Greek tragedy was one uninterrupted representation, from beginning to end. There was no division of acts; no pauses or interval between them; but the stage was continually full; occupied either by the actors, or the chorus. Hence, no room was left for the imagination to go beyond the precise time and place of the representation; any more than is allowed during the continuance of one act, on the modern theatre.

But the practice of suspending the spectacle totally for some little time between the acts, has made a great and material change; gives more latitude to the imagination, and renders the ancient strict confinement to time and place less necessary. While the acting of the play is interrupted, the spectator can, without any great or violent effort, suppose a few hours to pass between

between every act; or can suppose himself moved from one apartment of a palace, or one part of a city to another; and, therefore, too strict an observance of these unities, ought not to be preferred to higher beauties of execution, nor to the introduction of more pathetic situations, which sometimes cannot be accomplished in any other way, than by the transgression of these rules.

On the ancient stage, we plainly see the poets struggling with many an inconvenience, in order to preserve those unities which were then so necessary. As the scene could never be shifted, they were obliged to make it always lie in some court of a palace, or some public area, to which all the persons concerned in the action might have equal access. This led to frequent improbabilities, by representing things as transacted there, which naturally ought to have been transacted before few witnesses, and in private apartments. The like improbabilities arose, from limiting themselves so much in point of time. Incidents were naturally crowded; and it is easy to point out several instances in the Greek tragedies, where events are supposed to pass during a song of the chorus, which must necessarily have employed many hours.

But though it seems necessary to set modern poets free from a strict observance of these dramatic unities, yet we must remember, there are certain bounds to this liberty. Frequent and wild changes of time and place; hurrying the spectator from one distant city, or country, to another; or making several days or weeks, to pass during the course of the representation, are liberties which shock the imagination, which give to the performance a romantic and unnatural appearance, and, therefore, cannot be allowed in any dramatic writer who aspires to correctness. In particular, we must remember, that it is only between the acts, that any liberty can be given for going beyond the unities of time and place. During the course of each act, they ought to be strictly observed; that is, during each act the scene should continue the same, and no more time should be supposed to pass, than is employed in the representation of that act. This is a rule which the French tragedians regularly observe. To violate this rule, as is too often done by the English; to change the place, and shift the scene in the midst

of one act, shews great incorrectness, and destroys the whole intention of the division of a play into acts. Mr. Addison's Cato, is remarkable beyond most English tragedies, for regularity of conduct. The author has limited himself, in time, to a single day; and in place, has maintained the most rigorous unity. The scene is never changed; and the whole action passes in the hall of Cato's house, at Utica.

In general, the nearer that a poet can bring the dramatic representation, in all its circumstances, to an imitation of nature and real life, the impression which he makes on us will always be the more perfect. Probability, as I observed at the beginning of the Lecture, is highly essential to the conduct of the tragic action, and we are always hurt by the want of it. It is this that makes the observance of the dramatic unities to be of consequence, as far as they can be observed without sacrificing more material beauties. It is not, as has been sometimes said, that, by the preservation of the unities of time and place, spectators, when they assist at the theatre, are deceived into a belief of the reality of the objects which are there set before them; and that, when those unites are violated, the charm is broken, and they discover the whole to be a fiction. No such deception as this can ever be accomplished. No one ever imagines himself to be at Athens, or Rome, when a Greek or Roman subject is presented on the stage. He knows the whole to be an imitation only; but he requires that imitation to be conducted with skill and verisimilitude. His pleasure, the entertainment which he expects, the interest which he is to take in the story, all depend on its being so conducted. His imagination, therefore, seeks to aid the imitation, and to rest on the probability; and the poet, who shocks him by improbable circumstances, and by awkward, unskilful imitation, deprives him of his pleasure, and leaves him hurt and displeased. This is the whole mystery of the theatrical illusion.

LECTURE

LECTURE XLVI.

TRAGEDY. GREEK, FRENCH, ENGLISH TRAGEDY.

HAVING treated of the dramatic action in tragedy, I proceed next to treat of the characters most proper to be exhibited. It has been thought, by several critics, that the nature of tragedy requires the principal personages to be always of illustrious character, and of high, or princely rank; whose misfortunes and sufferings, it is said, take faster hold of the imagination, and impress the heart more forcibly, than similar events happening to persons in private life. But this is more specious, than solid. It is refuted by facts. For the distresses of Desdemona, Monimia, and Belvidera, interest us as deeply as if they had been princesses or queens. The dignity of tragedy does, indeed, require, that there should be nothing degrading, or mean, in the circumstances of the persons which it exhibits; but it requires nothing more. Their high rank may render the spectacle more splendid, and the subject seemingly of more importance, but conduces very little to its being interesting or pathetic; which depends entirely on the nature of the tale, on the art of the poet in conducting it, and on the sentiments to which it gives occasion. In every rank of life, the relations of father, husband, son, brother, lover, or friend, lay the foundation of those affecting situations, which make man's heart feel for man.

The moral characters of the persons represented, are of much greater consequence than the external circumstances in which the poet places them. Nothing, indeed, in the conduct of tragedy, demands a poet's attention more, than so to describe his personages, and so to order the incidents which relate to them, as shall leave upon the spectators, impressions favourable to virtue, and to the administration of Providence. It is not

necessary,

necessary, for this end, that poetical justice, as it is called, should be observed in the catastrophe of the piece. This has been long exploded from tragedy; the end of which is, to affect us with pity for the virtuous in distress, and to afford a probable representation of the state of human life, where calamities often befal the best, and a mixed portion of good and evil is appointed for all. But, withal, the author must beware of shocking our minds with such representations of life as tend to raise horror, or to render virtue an object of aversion. Though innocent persons suffer, their sufferings ought to be attended with such circumstances, as shall make virtue appear amiable and venerable; and shall render their condition, on the whole, preferable to that of bad men, who have prevailed against them. The stings and the remorse of guilt must ever be represented as productive of greater miseries, than any that the bad can bring upon the good.

Aristotle's observations on the characters proper for tragedy, are very judicious. He is of opinion, that perfect unmixed characters, either of good or ill men, are not the fittest to be introduced. The distresses of the one being wholly unmerited, hurt and shock us; and the sufferings of the other, occasion no pity. Mixed characters, such as in fact we meet with in the world, afford the most proper field for displaying, without any bad effect on morals, the vicissitudes of life; and they interest us the more deeply, as they display emotions and passions which we have all been conscious of. When such persons fall into distress through the vices of others, the subject may be very pathetic; but it is always more instructive, when a person has been himself the cause of his misfortune, and when his misfortune is occasioned by the violence of passion, or by some weakness incident to human nature. Such subjects both dispose us to the deepest sympathy, and administer useful warnings to us for our own conduct.

Upon these principles, it surprises me that the story of Œdipus should have been so much celebrated by all the critics, as one of the fittest subjects for tragedy; and so often brought upon the stage, not by Sophocles only, but by Corneille also, and Voltaire. An innocent person, one, in the main, of a virtuous character, through no crime of his own, nay, not by the vices

vices of others, but through mere fatality and blind chance, is involved in the greatest of all human miseries. In a casual rencounter, he kills his father, without knowing him; he afterwards is married to his own mother; and, discovering himself in the end to have committed both parricide and incest, he becomes frantic, and dies in the utmost misery. Such a subject excites horror rather than pity. As it is conducted by Sophocles, it is indeed extremely affecting; but it conveys no instruction; it awakens in the mind no tender sympathy; it leaves no impression favourable to virtue or humanity.

It must be acknowledged, that the subjects of the ancient Greek tragedies were too often founded on mere destiny, and inevitable misfortunes. They were too much mixed with their tales about oracles, and the vengeance of the gods, which led to many an incident sufficiently melancholy and tragical; but rather purely tragical than useful and moral. Hence both the Œdipus's of Sophocles, the Iphigenia in Aulis, the Hecuba of Euripides, and several of the like kind. In the course of the drama, many moral sentiments occurred. But the instruction, which the fable of the play conveyed, seldom was any more than that reverence was owing to the gods, and submission due to the decrees of destiny. Modern tragedy has aimed at a higher object, by becoming more the theatre of passion; pointing out to men the consequences of their own misconduct; shewing the direful effects which ambition, jealousy, love, resentment, and other such strong emotions, when misguided, or left unrestrained, produce upon human life. An Othello, hurried by jealousy to murder his innocent wife; a Jaffier, ensnared by resentment and want, to engage in a conspiracy, and then stung with remorse, and involved in ruin; a Siffredi, through the deceit which he employs for public-spirited ends, bringing destruction on all whom he loved; a Calista, seduced into a criminal intrigue, which overwhelms herself, her father, and all her friends in misery; these, and such as these, are the examples which tragedy now displays to public view; and by means of which, it inculcates on men the proper government of their passions.

Of all the passions which furnish matter to tragedy, that which has most occupied the modern stage, is love. To the

ancient theatre, it was a matter wholly unknown. In few of their tragedies is it ever mentioned; and I remember no more than one which turns upon it, the Hippolitus of Euripides. This was owing to the national manners of the Greeks, and to that greater separation of the two sexes from one another, that has taken place in modern times; aided too, perhaps, by this circumstance, that no female actors ever appeared on the ancient stage. But though no reason appear for the total exclusion of love from the theatre, yet with what justice or propriety it has usurped so much place, as to be in a manner the sole hinge of modern tragedy, may be much questioned. Voltaire, who is no less eminent as a critic than as a poet, declares loudly and strongly against this predominancy of love, as both degrading the majesty, and confining the natural limits of tragedy. And assuredly, the mixing of it perpetually with all the great and solemn revolutions of human fortune which belong to the tragic stage, tends to give tragedy too much the air of gallantry, and juvenile entertainment. The Athalie of Racine, the Merope of Voltaire, the Douglas of Mr. Home, are sufficient proofs, that without any assistance from love, the drama is capable of producing its highest effects upon the mind.

This seems to be clear, that wherever love is introduced into tragedy, it ought to reign in it, and to give rise to the principal action. It ought to be that sort of love which possesses all the force and majesty of passion; and which occasions great and important consequences. For nothing can have a worse effect, or be more debasing to tragedy, than, together with the manly and heroic passions, to mingle a trifling love intrigue, as a sort of seasoning to the play. The bad effects of this, are sufficiently conspicuous both in the Cato of Mr. Addison, as I had occasion before to remark, and in the Iphigenie of Racine.

After a tragic poet has arranged his subject, and chosen his personages, the next thing he must attend to, is the propriety of sentiments; that they may be perfectly suited to the characters of those persons to whom they are attributed, and to the situations in which they are placed. The necessity of observing this general rule is so obvious, that I need not insist upon it. It is principally in the pathetic parts, that both the difficulty and the importance of it are the greatest. Tragedy is the

the region of passion. We come to it expecting to be moved; and let the poet be ever so judicious in his conduct, moral in his intentions, and elegant in his style, yet if he fails in the pathetic, he has no tragic merit; we return cold and disappointed from the performance; and never desire to meet with it more.

To paint passion so truly and justly as to strike the hearts of the hearers with full sympathy, is a prerogative of genius given to few. It requires strong and ardent sensibility of mind. It requires the author to have the power of entering deeply into the characters which he draws; of becoming for a moment the very person whom he exhibits, and of assuming all his feelings. For as I have often had occasion to observe, there is no possibility of speaking properly the language of any passion, without feeling it; and it is to the absence or deadness of real emotion, that we must ascribe the want of success in so many tragic writers, when they attempt being pathetic.

No man, for instance, when he is under the strong agitations of anger, or grief, or any such violent passion, ever thinks of describing to another what his feelings at that time are; or of telling them what he resembles. This never was, and never will be, the language of any person, when he is deeply moved. It is the language of one who describes coolly the condition of that person to another; or it is the language of the passionate person himself, after his emotion has subsided, relating what his situation was in the moments of passion. Yet this sort of secondary description, is what tragic poets too often give us instead of the native and primary language of passion. Thus, in Mr. Addison's Cato, when Lucia confesses to Portius, her love for him, but, at the same time, swears with the greatest solemnity, that in the present situation of their country she will never marry him; Portius receives this unexpected sentence with the utmost astonishment and grief; at least the poet wants to make us believe that he so received it. How does he express these feelings?

> Fix'd in astonishment, I gaze upon thee,
> Like one just blasted by a stroke from Heav'n,
> Who pants for breath, and stiffens yet alive
> In dreadful looks; a monument of wrath.

This

This makes his whole reply to Lucia. Now did any person, who was of a sudden astonished and overwhelmed with sorrow, ever, since the creation of the world, express himself in this manner? This is indeed an excellent description to be given us by another, of a person who was in such a situation. Nothing would have been more proper for a bystander, recounting this conference, than to have said,

> Fix'd in astonishment, he gaz'd upon her,
> Like one just blasted by a stroke from Heav'n,
> Who pants for breath, &c.

But the person, who is himself concerned, speaks on such an occasion in a very different manner. He gives vent to his feelings; he pleads for pity; he dwells upon the cause of his grief and astonishment; but never thinks of describing his own person and looks, and showing us, by a smile, what he resembles. Such representations of passions are no better in poetry, than it would be in painting, to make a label issue from the mouth of a figure, bidding us remark, that this figure represents an astonished, or a grieved person.

On some other occasions, when poets do not employ this sort of descriptive language in passion, they are too apt to run into forced and unnatural thoughts, in order to exaggerate the feelings of persons, whom they would paint as very strongly moved. When Osmyn, in the Mourning Bride, after parting with Almeria, regrets, in a long soliloquy, that his eyes only see objects that are present, and cannot see Almeria after she is gone; when Jane Shore, in Mr. Rowe's Tragedy, on meeting with her husband in her extreme distress, and finding that he had forgiven her, calls on the rains to give her their drops, and the springs to give her their streams, that she may never want a supply of tears; in such passages, we see very plainly, that it is neither Osmyn, nor Jane Shore, that speak; but the poet himself in his own person, who, instead of assuming the feelings of those whom he means to exhibit, and speaking as they would have done in such situations, is straining his fancy, and spurring up his genius, to say something that shall be uncommonly strong and lively.

If we attend to the language that is spoken by persons under the influence of real passion, we shall find it always plain and

simple;

ſimple; abounding indeed with thoſe figures which expreſs a diſturbed and impetuous ſtate of mind, ſuch as interrogations, exclamations, and apoſtrophes; but never employing thoſe which belong to the mere embelliſhment and parade of ſpeech. We never meet with any ſubtility or refinement, in the ſentiments of real paſſion. The thoughts which paſſion ſuggeſts, are always plain and obvious ones, ariſing directly from its object. Paſſion never reaſons nor ſpeculates, till its ardour begins to cool. It never leads to long diſcourſe or declamation. On the contrary, it expreſſes itſelf moſt commonly in ſhort, broken, and interrupted ſpeeches; correſponding to the violent and deſultory emotions of the mind.

When we examine the French tragedians by theſe principles, which ſeem clearly founded in nature, we find them often deficient. Though in many parts of tragic compoſition, they have great merit; though in exciting ſoft and tender emotions, ſome of them are very ſucceſsful; yet in the high and ſtrong pathetic, they generally fail. Their paſſionate ſpeeches too often run into long declamation. There is too much reaſoning and refinement; too much pomp and ſtudied beauty in them. They rather convey a feeble impreſſion of paſſion, than awaken any ſtrong ſympathy in the reader's mind.

Sophocles and Euripides are much more ſucceſsful in this part of compoſition. In their pathetic ſcenes, we find no unnatural refinement; no exaggerated thoughts. They ſet before us the plain and direct feelings of nature, in ſimple expreſſive language; and therefore, on great occaſions, they ſeldom fail of touching the heart.* This too is Shakeſpeare's great excellency; and to this it is principally owing, that his dramatic productions, notwithſtanding their many imperfections, have been ſo long the favourites of the public. He is more faithful to

* Nothing, for inſtance, can be more touching and pathetic than the addreſs which Medea, in Euripides, makes to her children, when ſhe had formed the reſolution of putting them to death; and nothing more natural, than the conflict which ſhe is deſcribed as ſuffering within herſelf on that occaſion:

Φευ, φευ· τι προσδερκεσθε μ' ομμασιν τεκνα;
Τι προσγελατε τον πανυςατον γελων;
Αι, αι τι δρασω; καρδια γαρ οιχεται·
Γυναικες, ὀμμα φαιδρον ως ειδον τεκνων
Ουκ ἀν δυναιμην. χαιρετω βυλευματα, &c. Eur. Med. L. 1040.

to the true language of nature, in the midst of passion, than any writer. He gives us this language, unadulterated by art; and more instances of it can be quoted from him, than from all other tragic poets put together. I shall refer only to that admirable scene in Macbeth, where Macduff receives the account of his wife, and all his children being slaughtered in his absence. The emotions, first of grief, and then of the most fierce resentment rising against Macbeth, are painted in such a manner, that there is no heart but must feel them, and no fancy can conceive any thing more expressive of nature.

With regard to moral sentiments and reflections in tragedies, it is clear that they must not recur too often. They lose their effect, when unseasonably crowded. They render the play pedantic and declamatory. This is remarkably the case with those Latin tragedies which go under the name of Seneca, which are little more than a collection of declamations and moral sentiments, wrought up with a quaint brilliancy, which suited the prevailing taste of that age.

I am not, however, of opinion, that moral reflections ought to be altogether omitted in tragedies. When properly introduced, they give dignity to the composition, and, on many occasions they are extremely natural. When persons are under any uncommon distress; when they are beholding in others, or experiencing in themselves, the vicissitudes of human fortune; indeed, when they are placed in any of the great and trying situations of life, serious and moral reflections naturally occur in them, whether they be persons of much virtue or not. Hardly is there any person, but who, on such occasions, is disposed to be serious. It is then the natural tone of the mind; and therefore no tragic poet should omit such proper opportunities, when they occur, for favouring the interests of virtue. Cardinal Wolsey's soliloquy upon his fall, for instance, in Shakespeare, when he bids a long farewel to all his greatness, and the advices which he afterwards gives to Cromwell, are, in his situation, extremely natural; touch and please all readers; and are at once instructive and affecting. Much of the merit of Mr. Addison's Cato depends upon that moral turn of thought which distinguishes it. I have had occasion, both in this Lecture and in the preceding one, to take notice of some of its defects; and certainly neither for warmth of passion, nor proper

er conduct of the plot, it is at all eminent. It does not, however, follow, that it is destitute of merit. For, by the purity and beauty of the language, by the dignity of Cato's character, by that ardour of public spirit, and those virtuous sentiments of which it is full, it has always commanded high regard; and has, both in our own country and among foreigners, acquired no small reputation.

The style and versification of tragedy ought to be free, easy, and varied. Our blank verse is happily suited to this purpose. It has sufficient majesty for raising the style; it can descend to the simple and familiar; it is susceptible of great variety of cadence; and is quite free from the constraint and monotony of rhyme. For monotony is, above all things, to be avoided by a tragic poet. If he maintains every where the same stateliness of style, if he uniformly keeps up the same run of measure and harmony in his verse, he cannot fail of becoming insipid. He should not indeed sink into flat and careless lines; his style should always have force and dignity; but not the uniform dignity of epic poetry. It should assume that briskness and ease, which is suited to the freedom of dialogue, and the fluctuations of passion.

One of the greatest misfortunes of the French tragedy is, its being always written in rhyme. The nature of the French language, indeed, requires this, in order to distinguish the style from mere prose. But it fetters the freedom of the tragic dialogue, fills it with a languid monotony, and is, in a manner, fatal to the high strength and power of passion. Voltaire maintains, that the difficulty of composing in French rhyme, is one great cause of the pleasure which the audience receives from the composition. Tragedy would be ruined, says he, if we were to write it in blank verse; take away the difficulty, and you take away the whole merit. A strange idea! as if the entertainment of the audience arose, not from the emotions which the poet is successful in awakening, but from a reflection on the toil which he endured in his closet, from assorting male and female rhymes. With regard to those splendid comparisons in rhyme, and strings of couplets, with which it was, some time ago, fashionable for our English poets to conclude, not only every act of tragedy, but sometimes also the most interest-

ing scenes, nothing need be said, but that they were the most perfect barbarisms; childish ornaments, introduced to please a false taste in the audience; and now universally laid aside.

Having thus treated of all the different parts of tragedy, I shall conclude the subject, with a short view of the Greek, the French, and the English stage, and with observations on the principal writers.

Most of the distinguished characters of the Greek tragedy have been already occasionally mentioned. It was embellished with the lyric poetry of the chorus, of the origin of which, and of the advantages and disadvantages attending it, I treated fully in the preceding Lecture. The plot was always exceedingly simple. It admitted of few incidents. It was conducted, for most part, with a very exact regard to the unities of action, time, and place. Machinery, or the intervention of the gods, was employed; and, which is very faulty, the final unravelling sometimes made to turn upon it. Love, except in one or two instances, was never admitted into the Greek tragedy. Their subjects are often founded on destiny, or inevitable misfortunes. A vein of religious and moral sentiment always runs through them; but they made less use than the moderns of the combat of the passions, and of the distresses which our passions bring upon us. Their plots were all taken from the ancient traditionary stories of their own nation. Hercules furnishes matter for two tragedies. The history of Œdipus, king of Thebes, and his unfortunate family, for six. The war of Troy, with its consequences, for no fewer than seventeen. There is only one of later date than this; which is the Persæ, or expedition of Xerxes, by Æschylus.

Æschylus is the father of Greek tragedy, and exhibits both the beauties, and the defects, of an early original writer. He is bold, nervous, and animated, but very obscure and difficult to be understood; partly by reason of the incorrect state in which we have his works, (they having suffered more by time, than any of the ancient tragedians) and partly, on account of the nature of his style, which is crowded with metaphors, often harsh and tumid. He abounds with martial ideas and descriptions. He has much fire and elevation; less of tenderness, than of force. He delights in the marvellous. The ghost of Darius in the Persæ, the inspiration of Cassandra in Agamemnon,

non, and the songs of the furies in the Eumenides, are beautiful in their kind, and strongly expressive of his genius.

Sophocles is the most masterly of the three Greek tragedians; the most correct in the conduct of his subjects; the most just and sublime in his sentiments. He is eminent for his descriptive talent. The relation of the death of Œdipus, in his Œdipus Coloneus, and of the death of Hæmon and Antigone, in his Antigone, are perfect patterns of description to tragic poets. Euripides is esteemed more tender than Sophocles; and he is fuller of moral sentiments. But, in the conduct of his plays, he is more incorrect and negligent; his expositions, or openings of the subject, are made in a less artful manner; and the songs of his chorus, though remarkably poetical, have, commonly, less connexion with the main action, than those of Sophocles. Both Euripides and Sophocles, however, have very high merit as tragic poets. They are elegant and beautiful in their style; just, for the most part, in their thoughts; they speak with the voice of nature; and making allowance for the difference of ancient and modern ideas, in the midst of all their simplicity, they are touching and interesting.

The circumstances of theatrical representation on the stages of Greece and Rome, were, in several respects, very singular, and widely different from what obtains among us. Not only were the songs of the chorus accompanied with instrumental music, but the Abbé du Bos, in his reflections on poetry and painting, has proved, with much curious erudition, that the dialogue part had also a modulation of its own, which was capable of being set to notes; that it was carried on in a sort of recitative between the actors, and was supported by instruments. He has farther attempted to prove, but the proof seems more dubious, that on some occasions, on the Roman stage, the pronouncing and gesticulating parts were divided; that one actor spoke, and another performed the gestures and motions corresponding to what the first said. The actors in tragedy wore a long robe, called Syrma, which flowed upon the stage. They were raised upon Cothurni, which rendered their stature uncommonly high; and they always played in masques. These masques were like helmets, which covered the whole head; the mouths of them were so contrived, as to give an artificial sound to the voice, in order to make it be heard over their vast theatres;

tres; and the visage was so formed and painted, as to suit the age, characters, or dispositions of the persons represented. When, during the course of one scene, different emotions were to appear in the same person, the masque is said to have been so painted, that the actor, by turning one or other profile of his face to the spectators, expressed the change of the situation. This, however, was a contrivance attended with many disadvantages. The masque must have deprived the spectators of all the pleasure which arises from the natural animated expression of the eye and the countenance; and joined with the other circumstances which I have mentioned, is apt to give us but an unfavourable idea of the dramatic representations of the ancients. In defence of them, it must, at the same time, be remembered, that their theatres were vastly more extensive in the area than ours, and filled with immense crowds. They were always uncovered, and exposed to the open air. The actors were beheld at a much greater distance, and of course much more imperfectly by the bulk of the spectators, which both rendered their looks of less consequence, and might make it in some degree necessary that their features should be exaggerated, the sound of their voices enlarged, and their whole appearance magnified beyond the life, in order to make the stronger impression. It is certain, that, as dramatic spectacles were the favourite entertainments of the Greeks and Romans, the attention given to their proper exhibition, and the magnificence of the apparatus bestowed on their theatres, far exceeded any thing that has been attempted in modern ages.

In the composition of some of the French dramatic writers, particularly Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, tragedy has appeared with much lustre and dignity. They must be allowed to have improved upon the ancients, in introducing more incidents, a greater variety of passions, a fuller display of characters, and in rendering the subject thereby more interesting. They have studied to imitate the ancient models in regularity of conduct. They are attentive to all the unities, and to all the decorums of sentiment and morality; and their style is, generally, very poetical and elegant. What an English taste is most apt to censure in them, is the want of fervour, strength, and the natural language of passion. There is often too much

conversation

conversation in their pieces, instead of action. They are too declamatory, as was before observed, when they should be passionate; too refined, when they should be simple. Voltaire freely acknowledges these defects of the French theatre. He admits, that their best tragedies make not a deep enough impression on the heart; that the gallantry which reigns in them, and the long fine spun dialogue with which they over-abound, frequently spread a languor over them; that the authors seemed to be afraid of being too tragic; and very candidly gives it as his judgment, that an union of the vehemence and the action, which characterise the English theatre, with the correctness and decorum of the French theatre, would be necessary to form a perfect tragedy.

Corneille, who is properly the father of French tragedy, is distinguished by the majesty and grandeur of his sentiments, and the fruitfulness of his imagination. His genius was unquestionably very rich, but seemed more turned towards the epic than the tragic vein; for, in general, he is magnificent and splendid, rather than tender and touching. He is the most declamatory of all the French tragedians. He united the copiousness of Dryden with the fire of Lucan, and he resembles them also in their faults; in their extravagance and impetuosity. He has composed a great number of tragedies, very unequal in their merit. His best and most esteemed pieces, are the Cid, Horace, Polyeucte, and Cinna.

Racine, as a tragic poet, is much superior to Corneille. He wanted the copiousness and grandeur of Corneille's imagination; but is free of his bombast, and excels him greatly in tenderness. Few poets, indeed, are more tender and moving than Racine. His Phædra, his Andromaque, his Athalie, and his Mithridate, are excellent dramatic performances, and do no small honour to the French stage. His language and versification are uncommonly beautiful. Of all the French authors, he appears to me to have most excelled in poetical style; to have managed their rhyme with the greatest advantage and facility, and to have given it the most complete harmony. Voltaire has, again and again, pronounced Racine's Athalie to be the "Chef d'Oeuvre" of the French stage. It is altogether a sacred drama, and owes much of its elevation to the

majesty

majesty of religion; but it is less tender and interesting than Andromaque.

Racine has formed two of his plays upon plans of Euripides. In the Phædra he is extremely successful, but not so, in my opinion, in the Iphigenie; where he has degraded the ancient characters, by unseasonable gallantry. Achilles is a French lover; and Eriphile, a modern lady.*

Voltaire,

* The characters of Corneille and Racine are happily contrasted with one another, in the following beautiful lines of a French poet, which will gratify several readers.

CORNEILLE.

Illum nobilibus majestas evehit alis
Vertice tangentem nubes: stant ordine longo
Magnanimi circum heroës, fulgentibus omnes
Induti trabeis, Polyeuctus, Cinna, Seleucus,
Et Cidus, et rugis signatus Horatius ora.

RACINE.

Hunc circumvolitat penna alludente Cupido,
Vincla triumphatis insternens florea scenis;
Colligit hæc mollis genius, levibusque catenis
Heröas stringit dociles, Pyrrhosque, Titosque,
Pelidasque, ac Hippolytos, qui sponte sequuntur
Servitium, facilesque ferunt in vincula palmas.
Ingentes nimirum animos Cornelius ingens,
Et quales habet ipse, suis heroibus afflat
Sublimes sensus; vox olli mascula, magnum os,
Nec mortale sonans. Rapido fluit impetu vena,
Vena Sophocleis non inficianda fluentis.
Racinius Gallis haud visos ante theatris
Mollior ingedio teneros induxit amores.
Magnanimos quamvis sensus sub pectore verset
Agrippina, licet Romano robore Burrhus
Polleat, et magni generosa superbia Pori
Non semel eniteat, tamen esse ad mollia natum
Credideris vatem; vox olli mellea, lenis
Spiritus est; non ille animis vim concitus infert,
At cœcos animorum aditus rimatur, et imis
Mentibus occultos, syren penetrabilis, ictus
Insinuans, palpando ferit, læditque placendo.
Vena fluit facili non intermissa nitore,
Nec rapidos semper volvit cum murmure fluctus,
Agmine sed leni fluitat. Seu gramina lambit
Rivulus, et cœco per prata virentia lapsu
Aufugiens, tacita fluit indeprensus arena;
Flore micant ripæ illimes; huc vulgus amantum
Convolat, et lacrymis auget rivalibus undas:
Singultus undæ referunt, gemitusque sonoros
Ingeminant, molli gemitus imitante susurro.

Templum Tragœdiæ, per FR. MARSY, è Societate Jesu.

Voltaire, in ſeveral of his tragedies, is inferior to none of his predeceſſors. In one great article, he has outdone them all, in the delicate and intereſting ſituations which he has contrived to introduce. In theſe lies his chief ſtrength. He is not, indeed, exempt from the defects of the other French tragedians, of wanting force, and of being ſometimes too long and declamatory in his ſpeeches; but his characters are drawn with ſpirit, his events are ſtriking, and in his ſentiments there is much elevation. His Zaire, Alzire, Merope, and Orphan of China, are four capital tragedies, and deſerve the higheſt praiſe. What one might perhaps not expect, Voltaire is, in the ſtrain of his ſentiments, the moſt religious, and the moſt moral, of all tragic poets.

Though the muſical dramas of Metaſtaſio fulfil not the character of juſt and regular tragedies, they approach however ſo near it, and poſſeſs ſo much merit, that it would be unjuſt to paſs them over without notice. For the elegance of ſtyle, the charms of lyric poetry, and the beauties of ſentiment, they are eminent. They abound in well-contrived and intereſting ſituations. The dialogue, by its cloſeneſs and rapidity, carries a conſiderable reſemblance to that of the ancient Greek tragedies; and is both more animated and more natural, than the long declamation of the French theatre. But the ſhortneſs of the ſeveral dramas, and the intermixture of ſo much lyric poetry as belongs to this ſort of compoſition, often occaſions the courſe of the incidents to be hurried on too quickly, and prevents that conſiſtent diſplay of characters, and that full preparation of events, which are neceſſary to give a proper veriſimilitude to tragedy.

It only now remains to ſpeak of the ſtate of tragedy in Great Britain; the general character of which is, that it is more animated and paſſionate than French tragedy, but more irregular and incorrect, and leſs attentive to decorum and to elegance. The pathetic, it muſt always be remembered, is the ſoul of tragedy. The Engliſh, therefore, muſt be allowed to have aimed at the higheſt ſpecies of excellence; though, in the execution, they have not always joined the other beauties that ought to accompany the pathetic.

The first object which presents itself to us on the English theatre, is the great Shakespeare. Great he may be justly called, as the extent and force of his natural genius, both for tragedy and comedy, is altogether unrivalled.* But, at the same time, it is genius shooting wild; deficient in just taste, and altogether unassisted by knowledge or art. Long has he been idolized by the British nation; much has been said, and much has been written concerning him; criticism has been drawn to the very dregs, in commentaries upon his words and witticisms; and yet it remains, to this day, in doubt, whether his beauties, or his faults, be greatest. Admirable scenes, and passages, without number, there are in his plays; passages beyond what are to be found in any other dramatic writer; but there is hardly any one of his plays which can be called altogether a good one, or which can be read with uninterrupted pleasure from beginning to end. Besides extreme irregularities in conduct, and grotesque mixtures of serious and comic in one piece, we are every now and then interrupted by unnatural thoughts, harsh expressions, a certain obscure bombast, and a play upon words, which he is fond of pursuing; and these interruptions to our pleasure too frequently occur, on occasions, when we would least wish to meet with them. All these faults, however, Shakespeare redeems, by two of the greatest excellencies which any tragic poet can possess; his lively and diversified paintings of character; his strong and natural expressions of passion. These are his two chief virtues; on these his merit rests. Notwithstanding his many absurdities, all the while we are reading his plays, we find ourselves in the midst of our fellows; we meet with men, vulgar perhaps in their

* The character which Dryden has drawn of Shakespeare is not only just, but uncommonly elegant and happy. "He was the man, who of all modern, "and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. "All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not "laboriously, but luckily. When he describes any thing, you more than see "it; you feel it too. They who accuse him of wanting learning, give him "the greatest commendation. He was naturally learned. He needed not the "spectacles of books to read nature. He looked inward, and found her there. "I cannot say he is every where alike. Were he so, I should do him injury, "to compare him to the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat and insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches; his serious swelling into "bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to "him." Dryden's Essay on Dramatic Poetry.

their manners, coarse or harsh in their sentiments, but still they are men; they speak with human voices, and are actuated by human passions; we are interested in what they say or do, because we feel that they are of the same nature with ourselves. It is therefore no matter of wonder, that from the more polished and regular, but more cold and artificial performances of other poets, the public should return with pleasure to such warm and genuine representations of human nature. Shakespeare possesses likewise the merit of having created, for himself, a sort of world of præternatural beings. His witches, ghosts, fairies, and spirits of all kinds, are described with such circumstances of awful and mysterious solemnity, and speak a language so peculiar to themselves, as strongly to affect the imagination. His two master-pieces, and in which, in my opinion, the strength of his genius chiefly appears, are, Othello and Macbeth. With regard to his historical plays, they are, properly speaking, neither tragedies nor comedies; but a peculiar species of dramatic entertainment, calculated to describe the manners of the times of which he treats, to exhibit the principal characters, and to fix our imagination on the most interesting events and revolutions of our own country.*

After the age of Shakespeare, we can produce in the English language several detached tragedies of considerable merit. But we have not many dramatic writers, whose whole works are entitled either to particular criticism, or very high praise. In the tragedies of Dryden and Lee, there is much fire, but mixed with much fustian and rant. Lee's Theodosius, or the "Force "of Love," is the best of his pieces, and, in some of the scenes, does not want tenderness and warmth, though romantic in the plan, and extravagant in the sentiments. Otway was endowed with a high portion of the tragic spirit; which appears to great advantage in his two principal tragedies, "The Orphan," and "Venice Preserved." In these, he is perhaps too tragic; the distresses being so deep, as to tear and overwhelm the mind. He is a writer, doubtless, of genius and strong passion; but

* See an excellent defence of Shakespeare's Historical Plays, and several just observations on his peculiar excellencies as a tragic poet, in Mrs. Montegue's Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare.

but at the same time, exceedingly gross and indelicate. No tragedies are less moral than those of Otway. There are no generous or noble sentiments in them; but a licentious spirit often discovers itself. He is the very opposite of the French decorum; and has contrived to introduce obscenity and indecent allusions, into the midst of deep tragedy.

Rowe's tragedies make a contrast to those of Otway. He is full of elevated and moral sentiments. The poetry is often good, and the language always pure and elegant; but, in most of his plays, he is too cold and uninteresting; and flowery rather than tragic. Two, however, he has produced, which deserve to be exempted from this censure, Jane Shore, and the Fair Penitent; in both of which, there are so many tender and truly pathetic scenes, as to render them justly favourites of the public.

Dr. Young's Revenge, is a play which discovers genius and fire; but wants tenderness, and turns too much upon the shocking and direful passions. In Congreve's Mourning Bride, there are some fine situations, and much good poetry. The two first acts are admirable. The meeting of Almeria with her husband Osmyn, in the tomb of Anselmo, is one of the most solemn and striking situations to be found in any tragedy. The defects in the catastrophe, I pointed out in the last Lecture. Mr. Thomson's tragedies are too full of a stiff morality, which renders them dull and formal. Tancred and Sigismunda, far excels the rest; and for the plot, the characters, and sentiments, justly deserves a place among the best English tragedies. Of later pieces, and of living authors, I have all along declined to speak.

Upon the whole; reviewing the tragic compositions of different nations, the following conclusions arise. A Greek tragedy is the relation of any distressful or melancholy incident; sometimes the effect of passion or crime, oftener of the decree of the gods, simply exposed; without much variety of parts or events, but naturally and beautifully set before us; heightened by the poetry of the chorus. A French tragedy, is a series of artful and refined conversations, founded upon a variety of tragical and interesting situations; carried on with little action and vehemence; but with much poetical beauty, and

high

high propriety and decorum. An English tragedy is the combat of strong passions, set before us in all their violence; producing deep disasters; often irregularly conducted; abounding in action; and filling the spectators with grief. The ancient tragedies were more natural and simple; the modern are more artful and complex. Among the French, there is more correctness; among the English, more fire. Andromaque and Zaire, soften; Othello and Venice Preserved, rend the heart. It deserves remark, that three of the greatest master-pieces of the French tragic theatre, turn wholly upon religious subjects: the Athalie of Racine, the Polyeucte of Corneille, and the Zaire of Voltaire. The first is founded upon a historical passage of the Old Testament; in the other two, the distress arises from the zeal and attachment of the principal personages to the Christian faith; and in all the three, the authors have, with much propriety, availed themselves of the majesty which may be derived from religious ideas.

LECTURE XLVII.

COMEDY. GREEK AND ROMAN—FRENCH—ENGLISH COMEDY.

COMEDY is fufficiently difcriminated from tragedy, by its general fpirit and ftrain. While pity and terror, and the other ftrong paffions form the province of the latter, the chief or rather fole inftrument of the former, is ridicule. Comedy propofes for its object, neither the great fufferings nor the great crimes of men; but their follies and flighter vices, thofe parts of their character, which raife in beholders a fenfe of impropriety, which expofe them to be cenfured, and laughed at by others, or which render them troublefome in civil fociety.

This general idea of comedy, as a fatirical exhibition of the improprieties and follies of mankind, is an idea very moral and ufeful. There is nothing in the nature, or general plan of this kind of compofition, that renders it liable to cenfure. To polifh the manners of men, to promote attention to the proper decorums of focial behaviour, and above all to render vice ridiculous, is doing a real fervice to the world. Many vices might be more fuccefsfully exploded, by employing ridicule againft them, than by ferious attacks and arguments. At the fame time it muft be confeffed, that ridicule is an inftrument of fuch a nature, that when managed by unfkilful, or improper hands, there is hazard of its doing mifchief, inftead of good, to fociety. For ridicule is far from being, as fome have maintained it to be, a proper teft of truth. On the contrary, it is apt to miflead, and feduce, by the colours which it throws upon its objects, and it is often more difficult to judge, whether thefe colours be natural and proper, than it is to diftinguifh between fimple truth and error. Licentious writers, therefore, of the

comic

comic class, have too often had it in their power to cast a ridicule upon characters and objects which did not deserve it. But this is a fault, not owing to the nature of comedy, but to the genius and turn of the writers of it. In the hands of a loose immoral author, comedy will mislead and corrupt; while in those of a virtuous and well-intentioned one, it will be not only a gay and innocent, but a laudable and useful entertainment. French comedy is an excellent school of manners; while English comedy has been too often the school of vice.

The rules respecting the dramatic action, which I delivered in the first Lecture upon tragedy, belong equally to comedy; and hence, of course, our disquisitions concerning it are shortened. It is equally necessary to both these forms of dramatic composition, that there be a proper unity of action and subject: that the unities of time and place, be, as much as possible, preserved; that is, that the time of the action be brought within reasonable bounds; and the place of the action never changed, at least, not during the course of each act; that the several scenes or successive conversations be properly linked together; that the stage be never totally evacuated till the act closes; and that the reason should appear to us, why the personages who fill up the different scenes, enter and go off the stage, at the time when they are made to do so. The scope of all these rules, I showed, was to bring the imitation as near as possible to probability; which is always necessary, in order to any imitation giving us pleasure. This reason requires, perhaps, a stricter observance of the dramatic rules in comedy, than in tragedy. For the action of comedy being more familiar to us than that of tragedy, more like what we are accustomed to see in common life, we judge more easily of what is probable, and are more hurt by the want of it. The probable and the natural, both in the conduct of the story, and in the characters and sentiments of the persons who are introduced, are the great foundation, it must always be remembered, of the whole beauty of comedy.

The subjects of tragedy are not limited to any country, or to any age. The tragic poet may lay his scene, in whatever region he pleases. He may form his subject upon the history, either of his own, or of a foreign country; and he may take

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it from any period that is agreeable to him, however remote in time. The reverse of this holds in comedy, for a clear and obvious reason. In the great vices, great virtues, and high passions, men of all countries and ages resemble one another; and are therefore equally subjects for the tragic muse. But those decorums of behaviour, those lesser discriminations of character, which afford subject for comedy, change with the differences of countries and times; and can never be so well understood by foreigners, as by natives. We weep for the heroes of Greece and Rome, as freely as we do for those of our own country: but we are touched with the ridicule of such manners and such characters only, as we see and know; and therefore the scene and subject of comedy, should always be laid in our own country, and in our own times. The comic poet, who aims at correcting improprieties and follies of behaviour, should study "to catch the manners living as they "rise." It is not his business to amuse us with a tale of the last age, or with a Spanish or a French intrigue; but to give us pictures taken from among ourselves; to satirize reigning and present vices; to exhibit to the age a faithful copy of itself, with its humours, its follies, and its extravagances. It is only by laying his plan in this manner, that he can add weight and dignity to the entertainment which he gives us. Plautus, it is true, and Terence, did not follow this rule. They laid the scene of their comedies in Greece, and adopted the Greek laws and customs. But it must be remembered, that comedy was, in their age, but a new entertainment in Rome; and that then they contented themselves with imitating, often with translating merely, the comedies of Manander, and other Greek writers. In after times, it is known that the Romans had the "Comœdia Togata," or what was founded on their own manners, as well as the "Comœdia Palliata," or what was taken from the Greeks.

Comedy may be divided into two kinds; comedy of character, and comedy of intrigue. In the latter, the plot, or the action of the play, is made the principal object. In the former, the display of some peculiar character is chiefly aimed at; the action is contrived altogether with a view to this end, and is treated as subordinate to it. The French abound most in

comedies

comedies of character. All Moliere's capital pieces are of this sort; his Avare, for instance, Misanthrope, Tartuffe; and such are Destouches's also, and those of the other French comedians. The English have inclined more to comedies of intrigue. In the plays of Congreve, and, in general, in all our comedies, there is much more story, more bustle, and action, than on the French theatre.

In order to give this sort of composition its proper advantage, these two kinds should be properly mixed together. Without some interesting and well-conducted story, mere conversation is apt to become insipid. There should be always as much intrigue, as to give us something to wish, and something to fear. The incidents should so succeed one another, as to produce striking situations, and to fix our attention; while they afford at the same time a proper field for the exhibition of character. For the poet must never forget, that to exhibit characters and manners, is his principal object. The action in comedy, though it demands his care, in order to render it animated and natural, is a less significant and important part of the performance, than the action in tragedy: as in comedy, it is what men say, and how they behave, that draws our attention, rather than what they perform, or what they suffer. Hence it is a great fault to overcharge it with two much intrigue; and those intricate Spanish plots that were fashionable for a while, carried on by perplexed apartments, dark entries, and disguised habits, are now justly condemned and laid aside: for by such conduct, the main use of comedy was lost. The attention of the spectators, instead of being directed towards any display of characters, was fixed upon the surprising turns and revolutions of the intrigue; and comedy was changed into a mere novel.

In the management of characters, one of the most common faults of comic writers, is the carrying of them too far beyond life. Wherever ridicule is concerned, it is indeed extremely difficult to hit the precise point where true wit ends, and buffoonery begins. When the miser, for instance, in Plautus, searching the person whom he suspects for having stolen his casket, after examining first his right hand, and then his left, cries out, "ostende etiam tertiam," "shew me your third hand,"

(a ſtroke too which Moliere has copied from him) there is no one but muſt be ſenſible of the extravagance. Certain degrees of exaggeration are allowed to the comedian; but there are limits ſet to it by nature and good taſte; and ſuppoſing the miſer to be ever ſo much engroſſed by his jealouſy and his ſuſpicions, it is impoſſible to conceive any man in his wits ſuſpecting another of having more than two hands.

Characters in comedy ought to be clearly diſtinguiſhed from one another; but the artificial contraſting of characters, and the introducing them always in pairs, and by oppoſites, gives too theatrical and affected an air to the piece. This is become too common a reſource of comic writers, in order to heighten their characters, and diſplay them to more advantage. As ſoon as the violent and impatient perſon arrives upon the ſtage, the ſpectator knows that, in the next ſcene, he is to be contraſted with the mild and good-natured man; or if one of the lovers introduced be remarkably gay and airy, we are ſure that his companion is to be a grave and ſerious lover; like Frankly and Bellamy, Clarinda and Jacintha, in Dr. Hoadly's Suſpicious Huſband. Such productions of characters by pairs, is like the employment of the Antitheſis in diſcourſe, which, as I formerly obſerved, gives brilliancy indeed upon occaſions, but is too apparently a rhetorical artifice. In every ſort of compoſition, the perfection of art is to conceal art. A maſterly writer will therefore give us characters, diſtinguiſhed rather by ſuch ſhades of diverſity as are commonly found in ſociety, than marked with ſuch ſtrong oppoſitions, as are rarely brought into actual contraſt, in any of the circumſtances of life.

The ſtyle of comedy ought to be pure, elegant, and lively, very ſeldom riſing higher than the ordinary tone of polite converſation; and, upon no occaſion, deſcending into vulgar, mean, and groſs expreſſions. Here the French rhyme, which in many of their comedies they have preſerved, occurs as an unnatural bondage. Certainly, if proſe belongs to any compoſition whatever, it is to that which imitates the converſation of men in ordinary life. One of the moſt difficult circumſtances in writing comedy, and one too, upon which the ſucceſs of it very much depends, is to maintain, throughout, a current of eaſy, genteel, unaffected dialogue, without pertneſs and flippancy;

without

without too much ſtudied and unſeaſonable wit; without dulneſs and formality. Too few of our Engliſh comedies are diſtinguiſhed for this happy turn of converſation; moſt of them are liable to one or other of the exceptions I have mentioned. The Careleſs Huſband, and, perhaps, we may add the Provoked Huſband, and the Suſpicious Huſband, ſeem to have more merit than moſt of them, for eaſy and natural dialogue.

Theſe are the chief obſervations that occur to me, concerning the general principles of this ſpecies of dramatic writing, as diſtinguiſhed from tragedy. But its nature and ſpirit will be ſtill better underſtood, by a ſhort hiſtory of its progreſs; and a view of the manner in which it has been carried on by authors of different nations.

Tragedy is generally ſuppoſed to have been more ancient among the Greeks than comedy. We have fewer lights concerning the origin and progreſs of the latter. What is moſt probable, is, that, like the other, it took its riſe accidentally from the diverſions peculiar to the feaſt of Bacchus, and from Theſpis and his cart; till, by degrees, it diverged into an entertainment of a quite different nature from ſolemn and heroic tragedy. Critics diſtinguiſh three ſtages of comedy among the Greeks; which they call the Ancient, the Middle, and the New.

The ancient comedy conſiſted in direct and avowed ſatire againſt particular known perſons, who were brought upon the ſtage by name. Of this nature are the plays of Ariſtophanes, eleven of which are ſtill extant; plays of a very ſingular nature, and wholly different from all compoſitions which have, ſince that age, borne the name of comedy. They ſhew what a turbulent and licentious republic that of Athens was, and what unreſtrained ſcope the Athenians gave to ridicule, when they could ſuffer the moſt illuſtrious perſonages of their ſtate, their generals, and their magiſtrates, Cleon, Lamachus, Nicias, Alcibiades, not to mention Socrates the philoſopher, and Euripides the poet, to be publickly made the ſubject of comedy. Several of Ariſtophanes's plays are wholly political ſatires upon public management, and the conduct of generals and ſtateſmen, during the Peloponneſian war. They are ſo full of political

allegories

allegories and allusions, that it is impossible to understand them without a considerable knowledge of the history of those times. They abound, too, with parodies of the great tragic poets, particularly of Euripides; to whom the author was a great enemy, and has written two comedies, almost wholly in order to ridicule him.

Vivacity, satire, and buffoonery, are the characteristics of Aristophanes. Genius and force he displays upon many occasions; but his performances, upon the whole, are not calculated to give us any high opinion of the Attic taste of wit, in his age. They seem, indeed, to have been composed for the mob. The ridicule employed in them is extravagant; the wit, for the most part, buffoonish and farcical; the personal raillery, biting and cruel; and the obscenity that reigns in them, is gross and intolerable. The treatment given by this comedian, to Socrates the philosopher, in his play of "The Clouds," is well known; but however it might tend to disparage Socrates in the public esteem, P. Brumoy, in his Theatre Grec, makes it appear, that it could not have been, as is commonly supposed, the cause of decreeing the death of that philosopher, which did not happen till twenty-three years after the representation of Aristophanes's Clouds. There is a chorus in Aristophanes's plays; but altogether of an irregular kind. It is partly serious, partly comic; sometimes mingles in the action, sometimes addresses the spectators, defends the author, and attacks his enemies.

Soon after the days of Aristophanes, the liberty of attacking persons on the stage by name, being found of dangerous consequence to the public peace, was prohibited by law. The chorus also was, at this period, banished from the comic theatre, as having been an instrument of too much license and abuse. Then, what is called the middle comedy, took rise; which was no other than an elusion of the law. Fictitious names, indeed, were employed; but living persons were still attacked; and described in such a manner as to be sufficiently known. Of these comic pieces, we have no remains. To them succeeded the new comedy; when the stage being obliged to desist wholly from personal ridicule, became, what it is now, the picture of manners and characters, but not of particular persons.

fons. Menander was the moft diftinguifhed author, of this kind, among the Greeks; and both from the imitations of him by Terence, and the account given of him by Plutarch, we have much reafon to regret that his writings have perifhed; as he appears to have reformed, in a very high degree, the public tafte, and to have fet the model of correct, elegant, and moral comedy.

The only remains which we now have of the new comedy, among the ancients, are the plays of Plautus and Terence; both of whom were formed upon the Greek writers. Plautus is diftinguifhed for very expreffive language, and a great degree of the Vis Comica. As he wrote in an early period, he bears feveral marks of the rudenefs of the dramatic art, among the Romans, in his time. He opens his play with prologues, which fometimes pre-occupy the fubject of the whole piece. The reprefentation too, and the action of the comedy, are fometimes confounded; the actor departing from his character and addreffing the audience. There is too much low wit and fcurrility in Plautus; too much of quaint conceit, and play upon words. But withal, he difplays more variety, and more force than Terence. His characters are always ftrongly marked, though fometimes coarfely. His Amphytrion has been copied both by Moliere and by Dryden; and his Mifer alfo (in the Aulularia,) is the foundation of a capital play of Moliere's which has been once and again imitated on the Englifh ftage. Than Terence, nothing can be more delicate, more polifhed and elegant. His ftyle is a model of the pureft and moft graceful latinity. His dialogue is always decent and correct; and he poffeffes, beyond moft writers, the art of relating with that beautiful picturefque fimplicity, which never fails to pleafe. His morality is, in general, unexceptionable. The fituations which he introduces, are often tender and interefting; and many of his fentiments touch the heart. Hence, he may be confidered as the founder of that ferious comedy, which has, of late years, been revived, and of which I fhall have occafion afterwards to fpeak. If he fails in any thing, it is in fprightlinefs and ftrength. Both in his characters, and in his plots, there is too much famenefs and uniformity throughout all his

plays;

plays; he copied Menander, and is said not to have equalled him.* In order to form a perfect comic author, an union would be requisite of the spirit and fire of Plautus, with the grace and correctness of Terence.

When we enter on the view of modern comedy, one of the first objects which presents itself, is, the Spanish Theatre, which has been remarkably fertile in dramatic productions. Lopez de Vega, Guillin, and Calderon, are the chief Spanish comedians. Lopez de Vega, who is by much the most famous of them, is said to have written above a thousand plays; and our surprise at the number of his productions will be diminished, by being informed of their nature. From the account which M. Perron de Castera, a French writer, gives of them, it would seem, that our Shakespeare is perfectly a regular and methodical author, in comparison of Lopez. He throws aside all regard to the three unities, or to any of the established forms of dramatic writing. One play often includes many years, nay, the whole life of a man. The scene, during the first act, is laid in Spain, the next in Italy, and the third in Africa. His plays are mostly of the historical kind, founded on the annals of the country; and they are, generally, a sort of Tragi-comedies; or a mixture of heroic speeches, serious incidents, war and slaughter, with much ridicule and buffoonery. Angels and gods, virtues and vices, christian religion and pagan mythology, are all frequently jumbled together. In short, they are plays like no other dramatic compositions; full of the romantic and extravagant. At the same time, it is generally admitted, that in the works of Lopez de Vega, there are frequent marks of genius, and much force of imagination; many well drawn characters; many happy situations; many striking and interesting surprises; and, from the source of his rich invention, the dramatic writers of other countries are said to have frequently drawn their materials. He himself apologises for the extreme

irregularity

* Julius Cæsar has given us his opinion of Terence, in the following lines, which are preserved in the life of Terence, ascribed to Suetonius:

Tu quoque, tu in summis, ô dimidiate Menander,
Poneris, et merito, puri sermonis amator;
Lenibus atque utinam scriptis adjuncta foret vis
Comica, ut æquato virtus polleret honore
Cum Græcis, neque in hac despectus parte jaceres;
Unum hoc maceror, et doleo tibi deesse, Terenti.

irregularity of his compofition, from the prevailing tafte of his countrymen, who delighted in a variety of events, in ftrange and furprifing adventures, and a labyrinth of intrigues, much more than in a natural and regularly conducted ftory.

The general characters of the French comic theatre are, that it is correct, chafte, and decent. Several writers of confiderable note it has produced, fuch as Regnard, Dufrefny, Dancourt, and Marivaux; but the dramatic author, in whom the French glory moft, and whom they juftly place at the head of all their comedians, is, the famous Moliere. There is, indeed, no author in all the fruitful and diftinguifhed age of Louis XIV. who has attained a higher reputation than Moliere; or who has more nearly reached the fummit of perfection in his own art, according to the judgment of all the French critics. Voltaire boldly pronounces him to be the moft eminent comic poet of any age or country; nor, perhaps, is this the decifion of mere partiality; for taking him, upon the whole, I know none who deferves to be preferred to him. Moliere is always the fatirift only of vice or folly. He has felected a great variety of ridiculous characters peculiar to the times in which he lived, and he has generally placed the ridicule juftly. He poffeffed ftrong comic powers; he is full of mirth and pleafantry; and his pleafantry is always innocent. His comedies in verfe, fuch as the Mifanthrope and Tartuffe, are a kind of dignified comedy, in which vice is expofed in the ftyle of elegant and polite fatire. In his profe comedies, though there is abundance of ridicule, yet there is never any thing found to offend a modeft ear, or to throw contempt on fobriety and virtue. Together with thofe high qualities, Moliere has alfo fome defects, which Voltaire, though his profeffed panegyrift, candidly admits. He is acknowledged not to be happy in the unravelling of his plots. Attentive more to the ftrong exhibition of characters, than to the conduct of the intrigue, his unravelling is frequently brought on with too little preparation, and in an improbable manner. In his verfe comedies, he is fometimes not fufficiently interefting, and too full of long fpeeches; and in his more rifible pieces in profe, he is cenfured for being too farcical. Few writers, however, if any, ever poffeffed the fpirit, or at-

tained

tained the true end of comedy so perfectly, upon the whole, as Moliere. His *Tartuffe*, in the style of grave comedy, and his *Avare*, in the gay, are accounted his two capital productions.

From the English theatre, we are naturally led to expect a great variety of original characters in comedy, and bolder strokes of wit and humour, than are to be found on any other modern stage. Humour is, in a great measure, the peculiar province of the English nation. The nature of such a free government as ours; and that unrestrained liberty which our manners allow to every man, of living entirely after his own taste, afford full scope to the display of singularity of character, and to the indulgence of humour in all its forms.* Whereas, in France, the influence of a despotic court, the more established subordination of ranks, and the universal observance of the forms of politeness and decorum, spread a much greater uniformity over the outward behaviour and characters of men. Hence comedy has a more ample field, and can flow with a much freer vein in Britain than in France. But it is extremely unfortunate, that, together with the freedom and boldness of the comic spirit in Britain, there should have been joined such a spirit of indecency and licentiousness, as has disgraced English comedy beyond that of any nation, since the days of Aristophanes.

The first age, however, of English comedy, was not infected by this spirit. Neither the plays of Shakespeare, nor those of Ben Jonson, can be accused of immoral tendency. Shakespeare's general character, which I gave in the last Lecture, appears with as great advantage in his comedies as in his tragedies; a strong, fertile, and creative genius, irregular in conduct, employed too often in amusing the mob, but singularly rich and happy in the description of characters and manners. Jonson is more regular in the conduct of his pieces, but stiff and pedantic; though not destitute of dramatic genius. In the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, much fancy and invention appear, and several beautiful passages may be found. But, in general, they abound with romantic and improbable incidents, with overcharged and unnatural characters, and with coarse and gross allusions. Those comedies of the last age, by the change of public manners, and of the turn of conversation,

since

since their time, are now become too obsolete to be very agreeable. For we must observe, that comedy depending much on the prevailing modes of external behaviour, becomes sooner antiquated than any other species of writing; and, when antiquated, it seems harsh to us, and loses its power of pleasing. This is especially the case with respect to the comedies of our own country, where the change of manners is more sensible and striking, than in any foreign production. In our own country, the present mode of behaviour is always the standard of politeness; and whatever departs from it appears uncouth; whereas, in the writings of foreigners, we are less acquainted with any standard of this kind, and, of course, are less hurt by the want of it. Plautus appeared more antiquated to the Romans, in the age of Augustus, than he does now to us. It is a high proof of Shakespeare's uncommon genius, that, notwithstanding these disadvantages, his character of Falstaff is to this day admired, and his "Merry Wives of Windsor", read with pleasure.

It was not till the æra of the restoration of king Charles II. that the licentiousness which was observed, at that period, to infect the court, and the nation in general, seized, in a peculiar manner, upon comedy as its province, and, for almost a whole century, retained possession of it. It was then first, that the rake became the predominant character, and, with some exceptions, the hero of every comedy. The ridicule was thrown, not upon vice and folly, but much more commonly upon chastity and sobriety. At the end of the play, indeed, the rake is commonly, in appearance, reformed, and professes that he is to become a sober man; but throughout the play, he is set up as the model of a find gentleman; and the agreeable impression made by a sort of sprightly licentiousness, is left upon the imagination, as a picture of the pleasurable enjoyment of life; while the reformation passes slightly away, as a matter of mere form. To what sort of moral conduct such public entertainments as these tend to form the youth of both sexes, may be easily imagined. Yet this has been the spirit which has prevailed upon the comic stage of Great Britain, not only during the reign of Charles II. but throughout the reigns of king

William and queen Anne, and down to the days of king George II.

Dryden was the firſt conſiderable dramatic writer after the reſtoration; in whoſe comedies, as in all his works, there are found many ſtrokes of genius, mixed with great careleſſneſs, and viſible marks of haſty compoſition. As he ſought to pleaſe only, he went along with the manners of the times; and has carried through all his comedies that vein of diſſolute licentiouſneſs, which was then faſhionable. In ſome of them, the indecency was ſo groſs, as to occaſion, even in that age, a prohibition of being brought upon the ſtage.*

Since his time, the writers of comedy, of greateſt note, have been Cibber, Vanburgh, Farquhar, and Congreve. Cibber has written a great many comedies; and though in ſeveral of them, there be much ſprightlineſs, and a certain pert vivacity peculiar to him, yet they are ſo forced and unnatural in the incidents, as to have generally ſunk into obſcurity, except two, which have always continued in high favour with the public, "The Careleſs Huſband," and "The Provoked Huſband." The former is remarkable for the polite and eaſy turn of the dialogue; and, with the exception of one indelicate ſcene, is tolerably moral too in the conduct, and in the tendency. The latter, "The Provoked Huſband," (which was the joint production of Vanburgh and Cibber) is, perhaps, on the whole, the beſt comedy in the Engliſh language. It is liable, indeed, to one critical objection, of having a double plot; as the incidents of the Wronghead family, and thoſe of Lord Townly's, are ſeparate, and independent of each other. But this irregularity is compenſated by the natural characters, the fine painting, and the happy ſtrokes of humour with which it abounds. We are, indeed, ſurpriſed to find ſo unexceptionable a comedy proceeding from two ſuch looſe authors; for, in its general ſtrain, it is calculated to expoſe licentiouſneſs and folly; and would do honour to any ſtage.

Sir

* "The mirth which he excites in comedy will, perhaps, be found not ſo "much to arise from any original humour, or peculiarity of character, nicely "diſtinguiſhed, and diligently purſued, as from incidents and circumſtances, "artifices and ſurpriſes, from jeſts of action, rather than ſentiment. What "he had of humorous or paſſionate, he ſeems to have had, not from nature, "but from other poets; if not always a plagiary, yet, at leaſt, an imitator."
JOHNSON's Life of Dryden.

Sir John Vanburgh has ſpirit, wit, and eaſe; but he is, to the laſt degree, groſs and indelicate. He is one of the moſt immoral of all our comedians. His "Provoked Wife" is full of ſuch indecent ſentiments and alluſions, as ought to explode it out of all reputable ſociety. His "Relapſe" is equally cenſurable; and theſe are his only two conſiderable pieces. Congreve is, unqueſtionably, a writer of genius. He is lively, witty, and ſparkling; full of character, and full of action. His chief fault as a comic writer is, that he overflows with wit. It is often introduced unſeaſonably; and, almoſt every where, there is too great a proportion of it for natural well-bred converſation.* Farquhar is a light and gay writer; leſs correct, and leſs ſparkling than Congreve; but he has more eaſe; and, perhaps, fully as great a ſhare of the Vis Comica. The two beſt and leaſt exceptionable of his plays, are the "Recruiting Officer," and the "Beaux Stratagem." I ſay the leaſt exceptionable; for, in general, the tendency of both Congreve and Farquhar's plays is immoral. Throughout them all, the rake, the looſe intrigue, and the life of licentiouſneſs, are the objects continually held up to view; as if the aſſemblies of a great and poliſhed nation could be amuſed with none but vicious objects. The indelicacy of theſe writers, in the female characters which they introduce, is particularly remarkable. Nothing can be more awkward than their repreſentations of a woman of virtue and honour. Indeed, there are hardly any female characters in their plays except two; women of looſe principles; or, women of affected manners, when they attempt to draw a character of virtue.

The cenſure which I have now paſſed upon theſe celebrated comedians, is far from being overſtrained or ſevere. Accuſtomed to the indelicacy of our own comedy, and amuſed with the wit and humour of it, its immorality too eaſily eſcapes our obſervation. But all foreigners, the French eſpecially, who are accuſtomed to a better regulated, and more decent ſtage, ſpeak of it with ſurpriſe and aſtoniſhment. Voltaire, who is, aſſuredly, none of the moſt auſtere moraliſts, plumes himſelf not

* Dr. Johnſon ſays of him, in his life, that "his perſonages are a kind of "intellectual gladiators; every ſentence is to ward, or to ſtrike; the conteſt "of ſmartneſs is never intermitted; his wit is a meteor, playing to and fro "with alternate corruſcations."

not a little upon the superior *bienséance* of the French theatre; and says, that the language of English comedy is the language of debauchery, not of politeness. M. Moralt, in his Letters upon the French and English nations, ascribes the corruption of manners in London to comedy, as its chief cause. Their comedy, he says, is like that of no other country; it is the school in which the youth of both sexes familiarise themselves with vice, which is never represented there as vice, but as mere gaiety. As for comedies, says the ingenious M. Diderot, in his observations upon dramatic poetry, the English have none; they have, in their place, satires, full, indeed, of gaiety and force, but without morals, and without taste; *sans mœurs, et sans gout.* There is no wonder, therefore, that Lord Kaims, in his Elements of Criticism, should have expressed himself upon this subject, of the indelicacy of English comedy, in terms much stronger than any that I have used; concluding his invective against it in these words: "How odious ought those "writers to be, who thus spread infection through their na-"tive country; employing the talents which they have received "from their Maker most traiterously against himself, by en-"deavouring to corrupt and disfigure his creatures. If the com-"edies of Congreve did not rack him with remorse, in his last "moments, he must have been lost to all sense of virtue." Vol. II. 479.

I am happy, however, to have it in my power to observe, that of late years, a sensible reformation has begun to take place in English comedy. We have, at last, become ashamed of making our public entertainments rest wholly upon profligate characters and scenes; and our later comedies, of any reputation, are much purified from the licentiousness of former times. If they have not the spirit, the ease, and the wit of Congreve and Farquhar, in which respect they must be confessed to be somewhat deficient; this praise, however, they justly merit, of being innocent and moral.

For this reformation, we are, questionless, much indebted to the French theatre, which has not only been, at all times, more chaste and inoffensive than ours, but has, within these few years, produced a species of comedy, of still a graver turn than any that I have yet mentioned. This, which is called the serious,

serious, or tender comedy, and was termed by its opposers, *La Comedie Larmoyante*, is not altogether a modern invention. Several of Terence's plays, as the Andria, in particular, partake of this character; and as we know that Terence copied Menander, we have sufficient reason to believe that his comedies, also, were of the same kind. The nature of this composition, does not by any means exclude gaiety and ridicule; but it lays the chief stress upon tender and interesting situations; it aims at being sentimental, and touching the heart by means of the capital incidents; it makes our pleasure arise, not so much from the laughter which it excites, as from the tears of affection and joy which it draws forth.

In English, Steele's Conscious Lovers is a comedy which approaches to this character, and it has always been favourably received by the public. In French, there are several dramatic compositions of this kind, which possess considerable merit and reputation; such as the "Melanide," and "Prejugé à la "Mode," of La Chaussée; the "Père de Famille," of Diderot; the "Génie," of Mad. Graffigny; and the "Nanine," and "L'Enfant Prodigue," of Voltaire.

When this form of comedy first appeared in France, it excited a great controversy among the critics. It was objected to, as a dangerous and unjustifiable innovation in composition. It is not comedy, said they, for it is not founded on laughter and ridicule. It is not tragedy, for it does not involve us in sorrow. By what name then can it be called? or what pretentions hath it to be comprehended under dramatic writing? But this was trifling, in the most egregious manner, with critical names and distinctions, as if these had invariably fixed the essence, and ascertained the limits, of every sort of composition. Assuredly, it is not necessary that all comedies should be formed on one precise model. Some may be entirely light and gay; others may incline more to the serious; some may partake of both; and all of them, properly executed, may furnish agreeable and useful entertainments to the public, by suiting the different tastes of men.* Serious and tender comedy has no title to claim

* "Il y a beaucoup de très bonnes pièces, où il ne regne que de la gayeté; "d'autres toutes serieuses; d'autres melangées; d'autres, où l'attendrissement "va jusqu'aux larmes. Il ne faut donner exclusion à aucune genre; & si l'on "me demandoit, quel genre est le meilleur? Je répondrois, celui qui est le "mieux traité." VOLTAIRE.

claim to itself the possession of the stage, to the exclusion of ridicule and gaiety. But when it retains only its proper place, without usurping the province of any other; when it is carried on with resemblance to real life, and without introducing romantic and unnatural situations, it may certainly prove both an interesting and an agreeable species of dramatic writing. If it become insipid and drawling, this must be imputed to the fault of the author, not to the nature of the composition, which may admit much liveliness and vivacity.

In general, whatever form comedy assumes, whether gay or serious, it may always be esteemed a mark of society advancing in true politeness, when those theatrical exhibitions, which are designed for public amusement, are cleared from indelicate sentiment, or immoral tendency. Though the licentious buffoonery of Aristophanes amused the Greeks for a while, they advanced, by degrees, to a chaster and juster taste; and the like progress of refinement may be concluded to take place among us, when the public receive with favour, dramatic compositions of such a strain and spirit, as entertained the Greeks and Romans, in the days of Menander and Terence.

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